

02. The Florentine painters of the renaissance, by Bernhard Berenson

Section I

Florentine painting between Giotto and Michelangelo contains the names of such artists as Orcagna, Masaccio, Fra Filippo, Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio, Leonardo, and Botticelli. Put beside these the greatest names in Venetian art, the Vivarini, the Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and Tintoret. The difference is striking. The significance of the Venetian names is exhausted with their significance as painters. Not so with the Florentines. Forget that they were painters, they remain great sculptors; forget that they were sculptors, and still they remain architects, poets, and even men of science. They left no form of expression untried, and to none could they say, "This will perfectly convey my meaning." Painting, therefore, offers but a partial and not always the most adequate manifestation of their personality, and we feel the artist as greater than his work, and the man as soaring above the artist.

Many-sidedness of the painters

The immense superiority of the artist even to his greatest achievement in any one art form, means that his personality was but slightly determined by the particular art in question, that he tended to mould it rather than let it shape him. It would be absurd, therefore, to treat the Florentine painter as a mere link between two points in a necessary evolution. The history of the art of Florence never can be, as that of Venice, the study of a placid development. Each man of genius brought to bear upon his art a great intellect, which, never condescending merely to please, was tirelessly striving to incarnate what it comprehended of life in forms that would fitly convey it to others; and in this endeavour each man of genius was necessarily compelled to create forms essentially his own. But because Florentine painting was pre-eminently an art formed by great personalities, it grappled with problems of the highest interest, and offered solutions that can never lose

their value. What they aimed at, and what they attained, is the subject of the following essay.

Section II

The first of the great personalities in Florentine painting was Giotto. Although he affords no exception to the rule that the great Florentines exploited all the arts in the endeavour to express themselves, he, Giotto, renowned as architect and sculptor, reputed as wit and versifier, differed from most of his Tuscan successors in having peculiar aptitude for the essential in painting "as an art." But before we can appreciate his real value, we must come to an agreement as to what in the art of figure-painting--the craft has its own altogether diverse laws--"is" the essential; for figure-painting, we may say at once, was not only the one pre-occupation of Giotto, but the dominant interest of the entire Florentine school.

Imagination of touch

Psychology has ascertained that sight alone gives us no accurate sense of the third dimension. In our infancy, long before we are conscious of the process, the sense of touch, helped on by muscular sensations of movement, teaches us to appreciate depth, the third dimension, both in objects and in space.

In the same unconscious years we learn to make of touch, of the third dimension, the test of reality. The child is still dimly aware of the intimate connection between touch and the third dimension. He cannot persuade himself of the unreality of Looking-Glass Land until he has touched the back of the mirror. Later, we entirely forget the connection, although it remains true, that every time our eyes recognise reality, we are, as a matter of fact, giving tactile values to retinal impressions.

Now, painting is an art which aims at giving an abiding impression of artistic reality with only two

dimensions. The painter must, therefore, do consciously what we all do unconsciously,--construct his third dimension. And he can accomplish his task only as we accomplish ours, by giving tactile values to retinal impressions. His first business, therefore, is to rouse the tactile sense, for I must have the illusion of being able to touch a figure, I must have the illusion of varying muscular sensations inside my palm and fingers corresponding to the various projections of this figure, before I shall take it for granted as real, and let it affect me lastingly.

It follows that the essential in the art of painting--as distinguished from the art of colouring, I beg the reader to observe--is somehow to stimulate our consciousness of tactile values, so that the picture shall have at least as much power as the object represented, to appeal to our tactile imagination.

Giotto

Well, it was of the power to stimulate the tactile consciousness--of the essential, as I have ventured to call it, in the art of painting—that Giotto was supreme master. This is his everlasting claim to greatness, and it is this which will make him a source of highest æsthetic delight for a period at least as long as decipherable traces of his handiwork remain on mouldering panel or crumbling wall. For great though he was as a poet, enthralling as a story-teller, splendid and majestic as a composer, he was in these qualities superior in degree only, to many of the masters who painted in various parts of Europe during the thousand years that intervened between the decline of antique, and the birth, in his own person, of modern painting. But none of these masters had the power to stimulate the tactile imagination, and, consequently, they never painted a figure which has artistic existence. Their works have value, if at all, as highly elaborate, very intelligible symbols, capable, indeed, of communicating something, but losing all higher value the moment the message is delivered.

Giotto's paintings, on the contrary, have not only as much power of appealing to the tactile imagination as is possessed by the objects represented--human figures in particular--but actually more, with the necessary result that to his contemporaries they conveyed a “keener” sense of reality, of life-likeness

than the objects themselves! We whose current knowledge of anatomy is greater, who expect more articulation and suppleness in the human figure, who, in short, see much less naïvely now than Giotto's contemporaries, no longer find his paintings more than life-like; but we still feel them to be intensely real in the sense that they still powerfully appeal to our tactile imagination, thereby compelling us, as do all things that stimulate our sense of touch while they present themselves to our eyes, to take their existence for granted. And it is only when we can take for granted the existence of the object painted that it can begin to give us pleasure that is genuinely artistic, as separated from the interest we feel in symbols.

Analysis of the enjoyment of painting

At the risk of seeming to wander off into the boundless domain of æsthetics, we must stop at this point for a moment to make sure that we are of one mind regarding the meaning of the phrase "artistic pleasure," in so far at least as it is used in connection with painting.

What is the point at which ordinary pleasures pass over into the specific pleasures derived from each one of the arts? Our judgment about the merits of any given work of art depends to a large extent upon our answer to this question. Those who have not yet differentiated the specific pleasures of the art of painting from the pleasures they derive from the art of literature, will be likely to fall into the error of judging the picture by its dramatic presentation of a situation or its rendering of character; will, in short, demand of the painting that it shall be in the first place a good "illustration". Those others who seek in painting what is usually sought in music, the communication of a pleasurable state of emotion, will prefer pictures which suggest pleasant associations, nice people, refined amusements, agreeable landscapes. In many cases this lack of clearness is of comparatively slight importance, the given picture containing all these pleasure-giving elements in addition to the qualities peculiar to the art of painting. But in the case of the Florentines, the distinction is of vital consequence, for they have been the artists in Europe who have most resolutely set themselves to work upon the specific problems of the art of figure-painting, and have neglected, more than any other school, to call to their aid the secondary pleasures of association. With them the issue is clear. If we wish

to appreciate their merit, we are forced to disregard the desire for pretty or agreeable types, dramatically interpreted situations, and, in fact, "suggestiveness" of any kind. Worse still, we must even forego our pleasure in colour, often a genuinely artistic pleasure, for they never systematically exploited this element, and in some of their best works the colour is actually harsh and unpleasant. It was in fact upon form, and form alone, that the great Florentine masters concentrated their efforts, and we are consequently forced to the belief that, in their pictures at least, form is the principal source of our æsthetic enjoyment.

Now in what way, we ask, can form in painting give me a sensation of pleasure which differs from the ordinary sensations I receive from form? How is it that an object whose recognition in nature may have given me no pleasure, becomes, when recognised in a picture, a source of æsthetic enjoyment, or that recognition pleasurable in nature becomes an enhanced pleasure the moment it is transferred to art? The answer, I believe, depends upon the fact that art stimulates to an unwonted activity psychical processes which are in themselves the source of most (if not all) of our pleasures, and which here, free from disturbing physical sensations, never tend to pass over into pain. For instance: I am in the habit of realising a given object with an intensity that we shall value as 2. If I suddenly realise this familiar object with an intensity of 4, I receive the immediate pleasure which accompanies a doubling of my mental activity. But the pleasure rarely stops here. Those who are capable of receiving direct pleasure from a work of art, are generally led on to the further pleasures of self-consciousness. The fact that the psychical process of recognition goes forward with the unusual intensity of 4 to 2, overwhelms them with the sense of having twice the capacity they had credited themselves with: their whole personality is enhanced, and, being aware that this enhancement is connected with the object in question, they for some time after take not only an increased interest in it, but continue to realise it with the new intensity. Precisely this is what form does in painting: it lends a higher coefficient of reality to the object represented, with the consequent enjoyment of accelerated psychical processes, and the exhilarating sense of increased capacity in the observer. (Hence, by the way, the greater pleasure we take in the object painted than in itself.)

And it happens thus. We remember that to realise

form we must give tactile values to retinal sensations. Ordinarily we have considerable difficulty in skimming off these tactile values, and by the time they have reached our consciousness, they have lost much of their strength. Obviously, the artist who gives us these values more rapidly than the object itself gives them, gives us the pleasures consequent upon a more vivid realisation of the object, and the further pleasures that come from the sense of greater psychical capacity.

Furthermore, the stimulation of our tactile imagination awakens our consciousness of the importance of the tactile sense in our physical and mental functioning, and thus, again, by making us feel better provided for life than we were aware of being, gives us a heightened sense of capacity. And this brings us back once more to the statement that the chief business of the figure painter, as an artist, is to stimulate the tactile imagination.

The proportions of this small book forbid me to develop further a theme, the adequate treatment of which would require more than the entire space at my command. I must be satisfied with the crude and unilluminated exposition given already, allowing myself this further word only, that I do not mean to imply that we get no pleasure from a picture except the tactile satisfaction. On the contrary, we get much pleasure from composition, more from colour, and perhaps more still from movement, to say nothing of all the possible associative pleasures for which every work of art is the occasion. What I do wish to say is that "unless" it satisfies our tactile imagination, a picture will not exert the fascination of an ever-heightened reality; first we shall exhaust its ideas, and then its power of appealing to our emotions, and its "beauty" will not seem more significant at the thousandth look than at the first.

My need of dwelling upon this subject at all, I must repeat, arises from the fact that although this principle is important indeed in other schools, it is all-important in the Florentine school. Without its due appreciation it would be impossible to do justice to Florentine painting. We should lose ourselves in admiration of its "teaching," or perchance of its historical importance--as if historical importance were synonymous with artistic significance!--but we should never realise what artistic idea haunted the minds of its great men, and never understand why at a date so early it became academic.

Giotto and values of touch

Let us now turn back to Giotto and see in what way he fulfils the first condition of painting as an art, which condition, as we agreed, is somehow to stimulate our tactile imagination. We shall understand this without difficulty if we cover with the same glance two pictures of nearly the same subject that hang side by side in the Florence Academy, one by "Cimabue," and the other by Giotto. The difference is striking, but it does not consist so much in a difference of pattern and types, as of realisation. In the "Cimabue" we patiently decipher the lines and colours, and we conclude at last that they were intended to represent a woman seated, men and angels standing by or kneeling. To recognise these representations we have had to make many times the effort that the actual objects would have required, and in consequence our feeling of capacity has not only not been confirmed, but actually put in question.

With what sense of relief, of rapidly rising vitality, we turn to the Giotto! Our eyes scarcely have had time to light on it before we realise it completely--the throne occupying a real space, the Virgin satisfactorily seated upon it, the angels grouped in rows about it. Our tactile imagination is put to play immediately. Our palms and fingers accompany our eyes much more quickly than in presence of real objects, the sensations varying constantly with the various projections represented, as of face, torso, knees; confirming in every way our feeling of capacity for coping with things,--for life, in short. I care little that the picture endowed with the gift of evoking such feelings has faults, that the types represented do not correspond to my ideal of beauty, that the figures are too massive, and almost unarticulated; I forgive them all, because I have much better to do than to dwell upon faults.

But how does Giotto accomplish this miracle? With the simplest means, with almost rudimentary light and shade, and functional line, he contrives to render, out of all the possible outlines, out of all the possible variations of light and shade that a given figure may have, only those that we must isolate for special attention when we are actually realising it. This determines his types, his schemes of colour, even his compositions. He aims at types which both in face and figure are simple, large-boned, and massive,--

types, that is to say, which in actual life would furnish the most powerful stimulus to the tactile imagination. Obligated to get the utmost out of his rudimentary light and shade, he makes his scheme of colour of the lightest that his contrasts may be of the strongest. In his compositions, he aims at clearness of grouping, so that each important figure may have its desired tactile value. Note in the "Madonna" we have been looking at, how the shadows compel us to realise every concavity, and the lights every convexity, and how, with the play of the two, under the guidance of line, we realise the significant parts of each figure, whether draped or undraped. Nothing here but has its architectonic reason. Above all, every line is functional; that is to say, charged with purpose. Its existence, its direction, is absolutely determined by the need of rendering the tactile values. Follow any line here, say in the figure of the angel kneeling to the left, and see how it outlines and models, how it enables you to realise the head, the torso, the hips, the legs, the feet, and how its direction, its tension, is always determined by the action. There is not a genuine fragment of Giotto in existence but has these qualities, and to such a degree that the worst treatment has not been able to spoil them. Witness the resurrected frescoes in Santa Croce at Florence!

Symbolism of Giotto

The rendering of tactile values once recognised as the most important specifically artistic quality of Giotto's work, and as his personal contribution to the art of painting, we are all the better fitted to appreciate his more obvious though less peculiar merits--merits, I must add, which would seem far less extraordinary if it were not for the high plane of reality on which Giotto keeps us. Now what is back of this power of raising us to a higher plane of reality but a genius for grasping and communicating real significance? What is it to render the tactile values of an object but to communicate its material significance? A painter who, after generations of mere manufacturers of symbols, illustrations, and allegories had the power to render the material significance of the objects he painted, must, as a man, have had a profound sense of the significant. No matter, then, what his theme, Giotto feels its real significance and communicates as much of it as the general limitations of his art, and of his own skill permit. When the theme is sacred story,

it is scarcely necessary to point out with what processional gravity, with what hieratic dignity, with what sacramental intentness he endows it; the eloquence of the greatest critics has here found a darling subject. But let us look a moment at certain of his symbols in the Arena at Padua, at the "Inconstancy," the "Injustice," the "Avarice," for instance. "What are the significant traits," he seems to have asked himself, "in the appearance and action of a person under the exclusive domination of one of these vices? Let me paint the person with these traits, and I shall have a figure that perforce must call up the vice in question." So he paints "Inconstancy" as a woman with a blank face, her arms held out aimlessly, her torso falling backwards, her feet on the side of a wheel. It makes one giddy to look at her. "Injustice," is a powerfully built man in the vigour of his years dressed in the costume of a judge, with his left hand clenching the hilt of his sword, and his clawed right hand grasping a double hooked lance. His cruel eye is sternly on the watch, and his attitude is one of alert readiness to spring in all his giant force upon his prey. He sits enthroned on a rock, overtowering the tall waving trees, and below him his underlings are stripping and murdering a wayfarer. "Avarice" is a horned hag with ears like trumpets. A snake issuing from her mouth curls back and bites her forehead. Her left hand clutches her money-bag, as she moves forward stealthily, her right hand ready to shut down on whatever it can grasp. No need to label them: as long as these vices exist, for so long has Giotto extracted and presented their visible significance.

Giotto

Still another exemplification of his sense for the significant is furnished by his treatment of action and movement. The grouping, the gestures never fail to be just such as will most rapidly convey the meaning. So with the significant line, the significant light and shade, the significant look up or down, and the significant gesture, with means technically of the simplest, and, be it remembered, with no knowledge of anatomy, Giotto conveys a complete sense of motion such as we get in his Paduan frescoes of the "Resurrection of the Blessed," of the "Ascension of our Lord," of the God the Father in the "Baptism," or the angel in "Zacharias' Dream."

This, then, is Giotto's claim to everlasting appreciation as an artist: that his thorough-going sense for the significant in the visible world enabled him so to represent things that we realise his representations more quickly and more completely than we should realise the things themselves, thus giving us that confirmation of our sense of capacity which is so great a source of pleasure.

Section III

Followers of Giotto

For a hundred years after Giotto there appeared in Florence no painter equally endowed with dominion over the significant. His immediate followers so little understood the essence of his power that some thought it resided in his massive types, others in the swiftness of his line, and still others in his light colour, and it never occurred to any of them that the massive form without its material significance, its tactile values, is a shapeless sack, that the line which is not functional is mere calligraphy, and that light colour by itself can at the best spot a surface prettily. The better of them felt their inferiority, but knew no remedy, and all worked busily, copying and distorting Giotto, until they and the public were heartily tired. A change at all costs became necessary, and it was very simple when it came. "Why grope about for the significant, when the obvious is at hand? Let me paint the obvious; the obvious always pleases," said some clever innovator. So he painted the obvious,--pretty clothes, pretty faces, and trivial action, with the results foreseen: he pleased then, and he pleases still. Crowds still flock to the Spanish chapel in S. Maria Novella to celebrate the triumph of the obvious, and non-significant.

Pretty faces, pretty colour, pretty clothes, and trivial action! Is there a single figure in the fresco representing the "Triumph of St. Thomas" which incarnates the idea it symbolises, which, without its labelling instrument, would convey any meaning whatever? One pretty woman holds a globe and sword, and I am required to feel the majesty of empire; another has painted over her pretty clothes a bow and arrow, which are supposed to rouse me to a

sense of the terrors of war; a third has an organ on what was intended to be her knee, and the sight of this instrument must suffice to put me into the ecstasies of heavenly music; still another pretty lady has her arm akimbo, and if you want to know what edification she can bring, you must read her scroll. Below these pretty women sit a number of men looking as worthy as clothes and beards can make them; one highly dignified old gentleman gazes with all his heart and all his soul at--the point of his quill. The same lack of significance, the same obviousness characterise the fresco representing the "Church Militant and Triumphant." What more obvious symbol for the Church than a church? What more significant of St. Dominic than the refuted Paynim philosopher who (with a movement, by the way, as obvious as it is clever) tears out a leaf from his own book? And I have touched only on the value of these frescoes as allegories. Not to speak of the emptiness of the one and the confusion of the other, as compositions, there is not a figure in either which has tactile values,--that is to say, artistic existence.

While I do not mean to imply that painting between Giotto and Masaccio existed in vain--on the contrary, considerable progress was made in the direction of landscape, perspective, and facial expression,--it is true that, excepting the works of two men, no masterpieces of art were produced. These two, one coming in the middle of the period we have been dwelling upon, and the other just at its close, were Andrea Orcagna and Fra Angelico.

Andrea Orcagna

Of Orcagna it is difficult to speak, as only a single fairly intact painting of his remains, the altar-piece in S. Maria Novella. Here he reveals himself as a man of considerable endowment: as in Giotto, we have tactile values, material significance; the figures artistically exist. But while this painting betrays no peculiar feeling for beauty of face and expression, the frescoes in the same chapel, the one in particular representing Paradise, have faces full of charm and grace. I am tempted to believe that we have here a happy improvement made by the recent restorer. But what these mural paintings must always have had is real artistic existence, great dignity of slow but

rhythmic movement, and splendid grouping. They still convince us of their high purpose. On the other hand, we are disappointed in Orcagna's sculptured tabernacle at Or Sammichele, where the feeling for both material and spiritual significance is much lower.

Fra Angelico

We are happily far better situated toward Fra Angelico, enough of whose works have come down to us to reveal not only his quality as an artist, but his character as a man. Perfect certainty of purpose, utter devotion to his task, a sacramental earnestness in performing it, are what the quantity and quality of his work together proclaim. It is true that Giotto's profound feeling for either the materially or the spiritually significant was denied him--and there is no possible compensation for the difference; but although his sense for the real was weaker, it yet extended to fields which Giotto had not touched. Like all the supreme artists, Giotto had no inclination to concern himself with his attitude toward the significant, with his feelings about it; the grasping and presentation of it sufficed him. In the weaker personality, the significant, vaguely perceived, is converted into emotion, is merely felt, and not realised. Over this realm of feeling Fra Angelico was the first great master. "God's in his heaven--all's right with the world" he felt with an intensity which prevented him from perceiving evil anywhere. When he was obliged to portray it, his imagination failed him and he became a mere child; his hells are boggy-land; his martyrdoms are enacted by children solemnly playing at martyr and executioner; and he nearly spoils one of the most impressive scenes ever painted--the great "Crucifixion" at San Marco--with the childish violence of St. Jerome's tears. But upon the picturing of blitheness, of ecstatic confidence in God's loving care, he lavished all the resources of his art. Nor were they small. To a power of rendering tactile values, to a sense for the significant in composition, inferior, it is true, to Giotto's, but superior to the qualifications of any intervening painter, Fra Angelico added the charm of great facial beauty, the interest of vivid expression, the attraction of delicate colour. What in the whole world of art

more rejuvenating than Angelico's "Coronation" (in the Uffizi)--the happiness on all the faces, the flower-like grace of line and colour, the childlike simplicity yet un-qualifiable beauty of the composition? And all this in tactile values which compel us to grant the reality of the scene, although in a world where real people are standing, sitting, and kneeling we know not, and care not, on what. It is true, the significance of the event represented is scarcely touched upon, but then how well Angelico communicates the feeling with which it inspired him! Yet simple though he was as a person, simple and one-sided as was his message, as a product he was singularly complex. He was the typical painter of the transition from Mediæval to Renaissance.

The sources of his feeling are in the Middle Ages, but he "enjoys" his feelings in a way which is almost modern; and almost modern also are his means of expression. We are too apt to forget this transitional character of his, and, ranking him with the moderns, we count against him every awkwardness of action, and every lack of articulation in his figures. Yet both in action and in articulation he made great progress upon his precursors--so great that, but for Masaccio, who completely surpassed him, we should value him as an innovator. Moreover, he was not only the first Italian to paint a landscape that can be identified (a view of Lake Trasimene from Cortona), but the first to communicate a sense of the pleasantness of nature. How readily we feel the freshness and spring-time gaiety of his gardens in the frescoes of the "Annunciation" and the "Noli me tangere" at San Marco!

Section IV

Masaccio

Giotto born again, starting where death had cut short his advance, instantly making his own all that had been gained during his absence, and profiting by the

new conditions, the new demands--imagine such an avatar, and you will understand Masaccio.

Giotto we know already, but what were the new conditions, the new demands? The mediæval skies had been torn asunder and a new heaven and a new earth had appeared, which the abler spirits were already inhabiting and enjoying. Here new interests and new values prevailed. The thing of sovereign price was the power to subdue and to create; of sovereign interest all that helped man to know the world he was living in and his power over it. To the artist the change offered a field of the freest activity. It is always his business to reveal to an age its ideals. But what room was there for sculpture and painting,--arts whose first purpose it is to make us realise the material significance of things—in a period like the Middle Ages, when the human body was denied all intrinsic significance? In such an age the figure artist can thrive, as Giotto did, only in spite of it, and as an isolated phenomenon. In the Renaissance, on the contrary, the figure artist had a demand made on him such as had not been made since the great Greek days, to reveal to a generation believing in man's power to subdue and to possess the world, the physical types best fitted for the task. And as this demand was imperative and constant, not one, but a hundred Italian artists arose, able each in his own way to meet it,--in their combined achievement, rivalling the art of the Greeks.

In sculpture Donatello had already given body to the new ideals when Masaccio began his brief career, and in the education, the awakening, of the younger artist the example of the elder must have been of incalculable force. But a type gains vastly in significance by being presented in some action along with other individuals of the same type; and here Donatello was apt, rather than to draw his meed of profit, to incur loss by descending to the obvious--witness his "bas-reliefs" at Siena, Florence, and Padua. Masaccio was untouched by this taint. Types, in themselves of the manliest, he presents with a sense for the materially significant which makes us realise to the utmost their power and dignity; and the spiritual significance thus gained he uses to give the highest import to the event he is portraying; this import, in turn, gives a higher value to the types, and thus, whether we devote our attention to his types or to his action, Masaccio keeps us on a high plane of reality and significance. In later painting we shall easily find greater science, greater craft, and greater

perfection of detail, but greater reality, greater significance; I venture to say, never. Dust-bitten and ruined though his Brancacci Chapel frescoes now are, I never see them without the strongest stimulation of my tactile consciousness. I feel that I could touch every figure, that it would yield a definite resistance to my touch, that I should have to expend thus much effort to displace it, that I could walk around it. In short, I scarcely could realise it more, and in real life I should scarcely realise it so well, the attention of each of us being too apt to concentrate itself upon some dynamic quality, before we have at all begun to realise the full material significance of the person before us.

Then what strength to his young men, and what gravity and power to his old! How quickly a race like this would possess itself of the earth, and brook no rivals but the forces of nature! Whatever they do—simply because it is they--is impressive and important, and every movement, every gesture, is world-changing. Compared with his figures, those in the same chapel by his precursor, Masolino, are childish, and those by his follower, Filippino, unconvincing and without significance, because without tactile values. Even Michelangelo, where he comes in rivalry, has, for both reality and significance, to take a second place. Compare his "Expulsion from Paradise" (in the Sixtine Chapel) with the one here by Masaccio. Michelangelo's figures are more correct, but far less tangible and less powerful; and while he represents nothing but a man warding off a blow dealt from a sword, and a woman cringing with ignoble fear, Masaccio's Adam and Eve stride away from Eden heart-broken with shame and grief, hearing, perhaps, but not seeing, the angel hovering high overhead who directs their exiled footsteps.

Masaccio, then, like Giotto a century earlier,--himself the Giotto of an artistically more propitious world--was, as an artist, a great master of the significant, and, as a painter, endowed to the highest degree with a sense of tactile values, and with a skill in rendering them. In a career of but few years he gave to Florentine painting the direction it pursued to the end. In many ways he reminds us of the young Bellini. Who knows? Had he but lived as long, he might have laid the foundation for a painting not less delightful and far more profound than that of Venice. As it was, his frescoes at once became, and for as long as there were real artists among them remained, the training-school of Florentine painters.

Section V

Masaccio's death left Florentine painting in the hands of three men older, and two somewhat younger than himself, all men of great talent, if not of genius, each of whom--the former to the extent habits already formed would permit, the latter overwhelmingly, felt his influence. The older, who, but for Masaccio, would themselves have been the sole determining personalities in their art, were Fra Angelico, Paolo Uccello, and Andrea del Castagno; the younger, Domenico Veneziano and Fra Filippo. As these were the men who for a whole generation after Masaccio's death remained at the head of their craft, forming the taste of the public, and communicating their habits and aspirations to their pupils, we at this point can scarcely do better than try to get some notion of each of them and of the general art tendencies they represented.

Paolo Uccello

Fra Angelico we know already as the painter who devoted his life to picturing the departing mediæval vision of a heaven upon earth. Nothing could have been farther from the purpose of Uccello and Castagno. Different as these two were from each other, they have this much in common, that in their works which remain to us, dating, it is true, from their years of maturity, there is no touch of mediæval sentiment, no note of transition. As artists they belonged entirely to the new era, and they stand at the beginning of the Renaissance as types of two tendencies which were to prevail in Florence throughout the whole of the fifteenth century, partly supplementing and partly undoing the teaching of Masaccio.

Uccello had a sense of tactile values and a feeling for colour, but in so far as he used these gifts at all, it

was to illustrate scientific problems. His real passion was perspective, and painting was to him a mere occasion for solving some problem in this science, and displaying his mastery over its difficulties. Accordingly he composed pictures in which he contrived to get as many lines as possible leading the eye inward. Prostrate horses, dead or dying cavaliers, broken lances, ploughed fields, Noah's arks, are used by him with scarcely an attempt at disguise, to serve his scheme of mathematically converging lines. In his zeal he forgot local colour--he loved to paint his horses green or pink--forgot action, forgot composition, and, it need scarcely be added, significance. Thus in his battle-pieces, instead of adequate action of any sort, we get the feeling of witnessing a show of stuffed figures whose mechanical movements have been suddenly arrested by some clog in their wires; in his fresco of the "Deluge," he has so covered his space with demonstrations of his cleverness in perspective and foreshortening that, far from bringing home to us the terrors of a cataclysm, he at the utmost suggests the bursting of a mill-dam; and in the neighbouring fresco of the "Sacrifice of Noah," just as some capitably constructed figures are about to enable us to realise the scene, all possibility of artistic pleasure is destroyed by our seeing an object in the air which, after some difficulty, we decipher as a human being plunging downward from the clouds. Instead of making this figure, which, by the way, is meant to represent God the Father, plunge toward us, Uccello deliberately preferred to make it dash inward, away from us, thereby displaying his great skill in both perspective and foreshortening, but at the same time writing himself down as the founder of two families of painters which have flourished ever since, the artists for dexterity's sake--mental or manual, it scarcely matters--and the naturalists. As these two clans increased rapidly in Florence, and, for both good and evil, greatly affected the whole subsequent course of Florentine painting, we must, before going farther, briefly define to ourselves dexterity and naturalism, and their relation to art.

Art for dexterity's sake

The essential in painting, especially in figure-painting, is, we agreed, the rendering of the tactile values of the forms represented, because by this

means, and this alone, can the art make us realise forms better than we do in life. The great painter, then, is, above all, an artist with a great sense of tactile values and great skill in rendering them.

Now this sense, though it will increase as the man is revealed to himself, is something which the great painter possesses at the start, so that he is scarcely, if at all, aware of possessing it. His conscious effort is given to the means of rendering. It is of means of rendering, therefore, that he talks to others; and, because his triumphs here are hard-earned and conscious, it is on his skill in rendering that he prides himself. The greater the painter, the less likely he is to be aware of aught else in his art than problems of rendering--but all the while he is communicating what the force of his genius makes him feel without his striving for it, almost without his being aware of it, the material and spiritual significance of forms. However--his intimates hear him talk of nothing but skill; he seems to think of nothing but skill; and naturally they, and the entire public, conclude that his skill is his genius, and that skill "is" art. This, alas, has at all times been the too prevalent notion of what art is, divergence of opinion existing not on the principle, but on the kind of dexterity to be prized, each generation, each critic, having an individual standard, based always on the several peculiar problems and difficulties that interest them. At Florence these inverted notions about art were especially prevalent because it was a school of art with a score of men of genius and a thousand mediocrities all egging each other on to exhibitions of dexterity, and in their hot rivalry it was all the great geniuses could do to be faithful to their sense of significance. Even Masaccio was driven to exhibit his mere skill, the much admired and by itself wonderfully realised figure of a naked man trembling with cold being not only without real significance, but positively distracting, in the representation of a baptism. A weaker man like Paolo Uccello almost entirely sacrificed what sense of artistic significance he may have started with, in his eagerness to display his skill and knowledge.

As for the rabble, their work has now the interest of prize exhibitions at local art schools, and their number merely helped to accelerate the momentum with which Florentine art rushed to its end. But out of even mere dexterity a certain benefit to art may come. Men without feeling for the significant may yet perfect a thousand matters which make rendering easier and quicker for the man who comes with something to render, and when Botticelli and

Leonardo and Michelangelo appeared, they found their artistic patrimony increased in spite of the fact that since Masaccio there had been no man at all approaching their genius. This increase, however, was due not at all so much to the sons of dexterity, as to the intellectually much nobler, but artistically even inferior race of whom also Uccello was the ancestor--the Naturalists.

Naturalism in art

What is a Naturalist? I venture upon the following definition:--A man with a native gift for science who has taken to art. His purpose is not to extract the material and spiritual significance of objects, thus communicating them to us more rapidly and intensely than we should perceive them ourselves, and thereby giving us a sense of heightened vitality; his purpose is research, and his communication consists of nothing but facts. From this perhaps too abstract statement let us take refuge in an example already touched upon--the figure of the Almighty in Uccello's "Sacrifice of Noah." Instead of presenting this figure as coming toward us in an attitude and with an expression that will appeal to our sense of solemnity, as a man whose chief interest was artistic would have done--as Giotto, in fact, did in his "Baptism"--Uccello seems to have been possessed with nothing but the scientific intention to find out how a man swooping down head-foremost would have looked if at a given instant of his fall he had been suddenly congealed and suspended in space. A figure like this may have a mathematical but certainly has no psychological significance. Uccello, it is true, has studied every detail of this phenomenon and noted down his observations, but because his notes happen to be in form and colour, they do not therefore constitute a work of art. Wherein does his achievement differ in quality from a coloured map of a country? We can easily conceive of a relief map of Cadore or Giverny on so large a scale, and so elaborately coloured, that it will be an exact reproduction of the physical aspects of those regions, but never for a moment should we place it beside a landscape by Titian or Monet, and think of it as a work of art. Yet its relation to the Titian or Monet painting is exactly that of Uccello's achievement to Giotto's. What the scientist who

paints--the naturalist, that is to say,--attempts to do is not to give us what art alone can give us, the life-enhancing qualities of objects, but a reproduction of them as they are. If he succeeded, he would give us the exact visual impression of the objects themselves, but art, as we have already agreed, must give us not the mere reproductions of things but a quickened sense of capacity for realising them. Artistically, then, the naturalists, Uccello and his numerous successors, accomplished nothing. Yet their efforts to reproduce objects as they are, their studies in anatomy and perspective, made it inevitable that when another great genius did arise, he should be a Leonardo or a Michelangelo, and not a Giotto.

Andrea del Castagno

Uccello, as I have said, was the first representative of two strong tendencies in Florentine painting--of art for dexterity's sake, and art for scientific purposes. Andrea del Castagno, while also unable to resist the fascination of mere science and dexterity, had too much artistic genius to succumb to either. He was endowed with great sense for the significant, although, it is true, not enough to save him completely from the pitfalls which beset all Florentines, and even less from one more peculiar to himself--the tendency to communicate at any cost a feeling of power. To make us feel power as Masaccio and Michelangelo do at their best is indeed an achievement, but it requires the highest genius and the profoundest sense for the significant. The moment this sense is at all lacking, the artist will not succeed in conveying power, but such obvious manifestations of it as mere strength, or, worse still, the insolence not infrequently accompanying high spirits. Now Castagno, who succeeds well enough in one or two such single figures as his Cumæan Sibyl or his Farinata degli Uberti, which have great, if not the greatest, power, dignity, and even beauty, elsewhere condescends to mere swagger,--as in his Pipo Spano or Niccolo di Tolentino--or to mere strength, as in his "Last Supper," or, worse still, to actual brutality, as in his Santa Maria Nuova "Crucifixion." Nevertheless, his few remaining works lead us to suspect in him the greatest artist, and the most influential personality among the painters of the first generation after

Masaccio.

Section V

Domenico Veneziano

To distinguish clearly, after the lapse of nearly five centuries, between Uccello and Castagno, and to determine the precise share each had in the formation of the Florentine school, is already a task fraught with difficulties. The scantiness of his remaining works makes it more than difficult, makes it almost impossible, to come to accurate conclusions regarding the character and influence of their somewhat younger contemporary, Domenico Veneziano. That he was an innovator in technique, in affairs of vehicle and medium, we know from Vasari; but as such innovations, indispensable though they may become to painting as a craft, are in themselves questions of theoretic and applied chemistry, and not of art, they do not here concern us. His artistic achievements seem to have consisted in giving to the figure movement and expression, and to the face individuality. In his existing works we find no trace of sacrifice made to dexterity and naturalism, although it is clear that he must have been master of whatever science and whatever craft were prevalent in his day. Otherwise he would not have been able to render a figure like the St. Francis in his Uffizi altarpiece, where tactile values and movement expressive of character--what we usually call individual "gait"--were perhaps for the first time combined; or to attain to such triumphs as his St. John and St. Francis, at Santa Croce, whose entire figures express as much fervour as their eloquent faces. As to his sense for the significant in the individual, in other words, his power as a portrait-painter, we have in the Pitti one or two heads to witness, perhaps, the first great achievements in this kind of the Renaissance.

Fra Filippo Lippi

No such difficulties as we have encountered in the study of Uccello, Castagno, and Veneziano meet us as we turn to Fra Filippo. His works are still copious, and many of them are admirably preserved; we therefore have every facility for judging him as an artist, yet nothing is harder than to appreciate him at his due. If attractiveness, and attractiveness of the best kind, sufficed to make a great artist, then Filippo would be one of the greatest, greater perhaps than any other Florentine before Leonardo. Where shall we find faces more winsome, more appealing, than in certain of his Madonnas--the one in the Uffizi, for instance--more momentarily evocative of noble feeling than in his Louvre altar-piece?

Where in Florentine painting is there anything more fascinating than the playfulness of his children, more poetic than one or two of his landscapes, more charming than is at times his colour? And with all this, health, even robustness, and almost unfailing good-humour! Yet by themselves all these qualities constitute only a high-class illustrator, and such by native endowment I believe Fra Filippo to have been. That he became more--very much more--is due rather to Masaccio's potent influence than to his own genius; for he had no profound sense of either material or spiritual significance--the essential qualifications of the real artist. Working under the inspiration of Masaccio, he at times renders tactile values admirably, as in the Uffizi Madonna--but most frequently he betrays no genuine feeling for them, failing in his attempt to render them by the introduction of bunchy, billowy, calligraphic draperies. These, acquired from the late Giottesque painter (probably Lorenzo Monaco) who had been his first master, he seems to have prized as artistic elements no less than the tactile values which he attempted to adopt later, serenely unconscious, apparently, of their incompatibility. Filippo's strongest impulse was not toward the pre-eminently artistic one of re-creation, but rather toward expression, and within that field, toward the expression of the pleasant, genial, spiritually comfortable feelings of ordinary life. His real place is with the "genre" painters; only his "genre" was of the soul, as that of others--of Benozzo Gozzoli, for example--was of the body. Hence a sin of his own, scarcely less pernicious than that of the naturalists,

and cloying to boot--expression at any cost.

Section VI

Naturalism in Florentine art

From the brief account just given of the four dominant personalities in Florentine painting from about 1430 to about 1460, it results that the leanings of the school during this interval were not artistic and artistic alone, but that there were other tendencies as well, tendencies on the one side, toward the expression of emotion (scarcely less literary because in form and colour than if in words), and, on the other, toward the naturalistic reproduction of objects. We have also noted that while the former tendency was represented by Filippo alone, the latter had Paolo Uccello, and all of Castagno and Veneziano that the genius of these two men would permit them to sacrifice to naturalism and science. To the extent, however, that they took sides and were conscious of a distinct purpose, these also sided with Uccello and not with Filippo. It may be agreed, therefore, that the main current of Florentine painting for a generation after Masaccio was naturalistic, and that consequently the impact given to the younger painters who during this period were starting, was mainly toward naturalism. Later, in studying Botticelli, we shall see how difficult it was for any one young at the time to escape this tide, even if by temperament farthest removed from scientific interests.

Meanwhile we must continue our study of the naturalists, but now of the second generation. Their number and importance from 1460 to 1490 is not alone due to the fact that art education toward the beginning of this epoch was mainly naturalistic, but also to the real needs of a rapidly advancing craft, and even more to the character of the Florentine

mind, the dominant turn of which was to science and not to art. But as there were then no professions scientific in the stricter sense of the word, and as art of some form was the pursuit of a considerable proportion of the male inhabitants of Florence, it happened inevitably that many a lad with the natural capacities of a Galileo was in early boyhood apprenticed as an artist. And as he never acquired ordinary methods of scientific expression, and never had time for occupations not bread-winning, he was obliged his life long to make of his art both the subject of his strong instinctive interest in science, and the vehicle of conveying his knowledge to others.

Alessio Baldovinetti

This was literally the case with the oldest among the leaders of the new generation, Alessio Baldovinetti, in whose scanty remaining works no trace of purely artistic feeling or interest can be discerned; and it is only less true of Alessio's somewhat younger, but far more gifted contemporaries, Antonio Pollaiuolo and Andrea Verrocchio. These also we should scarcely suspect of being more than men of science, if Pollaiuolo once or twice, and Verrocchio more frequently, did not dazzle us with works of almost supreme art, which, but for our readiness to believe in the manifold possibilities of Florentine genius, we should with exceeding difficulty accept as their creation--so little do they seem to result from their conscious striving. Alessio's attention being largely devoted to problems of vehicle--to the side of painting which is scarcely superior to cookery--he had time for little else, although that spare time he gave to the study of landscape, in the rendering of which he was among the innovators. Andrea and Antonio set themselves the much worthier task of increasing on every side the effectiveness of the figure arts, of which, sculpture no less than painting, they aimed to be masters.

Pollaiuolo and Verrocchio

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To confine ourselves, however, as closely as we may to painting, and leaving aside for the present the question of colour, which, as I have already said, is, in Florentine art, of entirely subordinate importance, there were three directions in which painting as Pollaiuolo and Verrocchio found it had greatly to advance before it could attain its maximum of effectiveness: landscape, movement, and the nude. Giotto had attempted none of these. The nude, of course, he scarcely touched; movement he suggested admirably, but never rendered; and in landscape he was satisfied with indications hardly more than symbolical, although quite adequate to his purpose, which was to confine himself to the human figure. In all directions Masaccio made immense progress, guided by his never failing sense for material significance, which, as it led him to render the tactile values of each figure separately, compelled him also to render the tactile values of groups as wholes, and of their landscape surroundings--by preference, hills so shaped as readily to stimulate the tactile imagination. For what he accomplished in the nude and in movement, we have his "Expulsion" and his "Man Trembling with Cold" to witness. But in his works neither landscape nor movement, nor the nude, are as yet distinct sources of artistic pleasure--that is to say, in themselves life-enhancing. Although we can well leave the nude until we come to Michelangelo, who was the first to completely realise its distinctly artistic possibilities, we cannot so well dispense with an enquiry into the sources of our æsthetic pleasure in the representation of movement and of landscape, as it was in these two directions—in movement by Pollaiuolo especially, and in landscape by Baldovinetti, Pollaiuolo, and Verrocchio--that the great advances of this generation of Florentine painters were made.

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Turning our attention first to movement--which, by the way, is not the same as motion, mere change of place--we find that we realise it just as we realise objects, by the stimulation of our tactile imagination, only that here touch retires to a second place before the muscular feelings of varying pressure and strain. I see (to take an example) two men wrestling, but unless my retinal impressions are immediately translated into images of strain and pressure in my muscles, of resistance to my weight, of touch all over my body, it means nothing to me in terms of vivid experience--not more, perhaps, than if I heard some one say "Two men are wrestling." Although a wrestling match may, in fact, contain many genuinely artistic elements, our enjoyment of it can never be quite artistic; we are prevented from completely realising it not only by our dramatic interest in the game, but also, granting the possibility of being devoid of dramatic interest, by the succession of movements being too rapid for us to realise each completely, and too fatiguing, even if realisable. Now if a way could be found of conveying to us the realisation of movement without the confusion and the fatigue of the actuality, we should be getting out of the wrestlers more than they themselves can give us--the heightening of vitality which comes to us whenever we keenly realise life, such as the actuality itself would give us, "plus" the greater effectiveness of the heightening brought about by the clearer, intenser, and less fatiguing realisation. This is precisely what the artist who succeeds in representing movement achieves: making us realise it as we never can actually, he gives us a heightened sense of capacity, and whatever is in the actuality enjoyable, he allows us to enjoy at our leisure. In words already familiar to us, he "extracts the significance of movements", just as, in rendering tactile values, the artist extracts the corporeal significance of objects. His task is, however, far more difficult, although less indispensable:--it is not enough that he should extract the values of what at any given moment is an actuality, as is an object, but what at no moment really is--namely movement. He can accomplish his task in only one way, and that is by so rendering the one particular movement that we shall be able to realise all other movements that the same figure may make. "He is grappling with his enemy now," I say of my wrestler. "What a pleasure to be able to realise in my own muscles, on my own chest, with my own arms and legs, the life that is in him as he is making his supreme effort! What a pleasure, as I look away from the representation, to realise in the same

manner, how after the contest his muscles will relax, and rest trickle like a refreshing stream through his nerves!" All this I shall be made to enjoy by the artist who, in representing any one movement, can give me the logical sequence of visible strain and pressure in the parts and muscles.

It is just here that the scientific spirit of the Florentine naturalists was of immense service to art. This logic of sequence is to be attained only by great, although not necessarily more than empiric, knowledge of anatomy, such perhaps as the artist pure would never be inclined to work out for himself, but just such as would be of absorbing interest to those scientists by temperament and artists by profession whom we have in Pollaiuolo and, to a less extent, in Verrocchio. We remember how Giotto contrived to render tactile values. Of all the possible outlines, of all the possible variations of light and shade that a figure may have, he selected those that we must isolate for special attention when we are actually realising it. If instead of figure, we say figure in movement, the same statement applies to the way Pollaiuolo rendered movement--with this difference, however, that he had to render what in actuality we never can perfectly isolate, the line and light and shade most significant of any given action. This the artist must construct himself out of his dramatic feeling for pressure and strain and his ability to articulate the figure in all its logical sequences, for, if he would convey a sense of movement, he must give the line and the light and shade which will best render not tactile values alone, but the sequences of articulations.

“Battle of the nudes”

It would be difficult to find more effective illustration of all that has just been said about movement than one or two of Pollaiuolo's own works, which, in contrast to most of his achievements, where little more than effort and research are visible, are really masterpieces of life-communicating art. Let us look first at his engraving known as the "Battle of the Nudes." What is it that makes us return to this sheet with ever renewed, ever increased pleasure? Surely it is not the hideous faces of most of the figures and

their scarcely less hideous bodies. Nor is it the pattern as decorative design, which is of great beauty indeed, but not at all in proportion to the spell exerted upon us. Least of all is it--for most of us--an interest in the technique or history of engraving. No, the pleasure we take in these savagely battling forms arises from their power to directly communicate life, to immensely heighten our sense of vitality. Look at the combatant prostrate on the ground and his assailant bending over, each intent on stabbing the other. See how the prostrate man plants his foot on the thigh of his enemy, and note the tremendous energy he exerts to keep off the foe, who, turning as upon a pivot, with his grip on the other's head, exerts no less force to keep the advantage gained. The significance of all these muscular strains and pressures is so rendered that we cannot help realising them; we imagine ourselves imitating all the movements, and exerting the force required for them--and all without the least effort on our side. If all this without moving a muscle, what should we feel if we too had exerted ourselves! And thus while under the spell of this illusion--this hyperæsthesia not bought with drugs, and not paid for with cheques drawn on our vitality--we feel as if the elixir of life, not our own sluggish blood, were coursing through our veins.

Hercules Strangling David

Let us look now at an even greater triumph of movement than the Nudes, Pollaiuolo's "Hercules Strangling Antæus." As you realise the suction of Hercules' grip on the earth, the swelling of his calves with the pressure that falls on them, the violent throwing back of his chest, the stifling force of his embrace; as you realise the supreme effort of Antæus, with one hand crushing down upon the head and the other tearing at the arm of Hercules, you feel as if a fountain of energy had sprung up under your feet and were playing through your veins. I cannot refrain from mentioning still another masterpiece, this time not only of movement, but of tactile values and personal beauty as well--Pollaiuolo's "David" at Berlin. The young warrior has sped his stone, cut off the giant's head, and now he strides over it, his graceful, slender figure still vibrating with the rapidity of his triumph, expectant, as if fearing the ease of it. What lightness, what buoyancy we feel as we realise the movement of this wonderful youth!

Section IX

Verrocchio and landscape

In all that concerns movement, Verrocchio was a learner from Pollaiuolo, rather than an initiator, and he probably never attained his master's proficiency. We have unfortunately but few terms for comparison, as the only paintings which can be with certainty ascribed to Verrocchio are not pictures of action. A drawing however like that of his angel, in the British Museum, which attempts as much movement as the Hercules by Pollaiuolo, in the same collection, is of obviously inferior quality. Yet in sculpture, along with works which are valuable as harbingers of Leonardo rather than for any intrinsic perfection, he created two such masterpieces of movement as the "Child with the Dolphin" in the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, and the Colleoni monument at Venice--the latter sinning, if at all, by an over-exuberance of movement, by a step and swing too suggestive of drums and trumpets. But in landscape Verrocchio was a decided innovator. To understand what new elements he introduced, we must at this point carry out our determination to enquire into the source of our pleasure in landscape painting; or rather--to avoid a subject of vast extent for which this is not the place--of landscape painting as practised by the Florentines.

Landscape painting

Before Verrocchio, his precursors, first Alessio Baldovinetti and then Pollaiuolo, had attempted to treat landscape as naturalistically as painting would permit. Their ideal was to note it down with absolute correctness from a given point of view; their subject almost invariably the Valdarno; their achievement, a bird's-eye view of this Tuscan paradise. Nor can it be denied that this gives pleasure, but the pleasure is

only such as is conveyed by tactile values. Instead of having the difficulty we should have in nature to distinguish clearly points near the horizon's edge, we here see them perfectly and without an effort, and in consequence feel great confirmation of capacity for life. Now if landscape were, as most people vaguely believe, a pleasure coming through the eyes alone, then the Pollaiuolo's treatment could be equalled by none that has followed, and surpassed only by Rogier van der Weyden, or by the quaint German "Master of the Lyversberg Passion," who makes us see objects miles away with as great a precision and with as much intensity of local colour as if we were standing off from them a few feet. Were landscape really this, then nothing more inartistic than gradation of tint, atmosphere, and "plein air", all of which help to make distant objects less clear, and therefore tend in no way to heighten our sense of capacity. But as a matter of fact the pleasure we take in actual landscape is only to a limited extent an affair of the eye, and to a great extent one of unusually intense well-being. The painter's problem, therefore, is not merely to render the tactile values of the visible objects, but to convey, more rapidly and unfailingly than nature would do, "the consciousness" of an unusually intense degree of well-being. This task--the communication by means purely visual of feelings occasioned chiefly by sensations non-visual--is of such difficulty that, until recently, successes in the rendering of what is peculiar to landscape as an art, and to landscape alone, were accidental and sporadic. Only now, in our own days, may painting be said to be grappling with this problem seriously; and perhaps we are already at the dawn of an art which will have to what has hitherto been called landscape, the relation of our music to the music of the Greeks or of the Middle Ages.

Verrocchio's landscapes

Verrocchio was, among Florentines at least, the first to feel that a faithful reproduction of the contours is not landscape, that the painting of nature is an art distinct from the painting of the figure. He scarcely knew where the difference lay, but felt that light and atmosphere play an entirely different part in each, and that in landscape these have at least as much importance as tactile values. A vision of "plein air",

vague I must grant, seems to have hovered before him, and, feeling his powerlessness to cope with it in full effects of light such as he attempted in his earlier pictures, he deliberately chose the twilight hour, when, in Tuscany, on fine days, the trees stand out almost black against a sky of light opalescent grey. To render this subduing, soothing effect of the coolness and the dew after the glare and dust of the day--the effect so matchlessly given in Gray's "Elegy"--seemed to be his first desire as a painter, and in presence of his "Annunciation" (in the Uffizi), we feel that he succeeded as only one other Tuscan succeeded after him, that other being his own pupil Leonardo.

Section X

Genre artists

It is a temptation to hasten on from Pollaiuolo and Verrocchio to Botticelli and Leonardo, to men of genius as artists reappearing again after two generations, men who accomplished with scarcely an effort what their precursors had been toiling after. But from these it would be even more difficult than at present to turn back to painters of scarcely any rank among the world's great artists, and of scarcely any importance as links in a chain of evolution, but not to be passed by, partly because of certain qualities they do possess, and partly because their names would be missed in an account, even so brief as this, of Florentine painting. The men I chiefly refer to, one most active toward the middle and the other toward the end of the fifteenth century, are Benozzo Gozzoli and Domenico Ghirlandaio. Although they have been rarely coupled together, they have much in common. Both were, as artists, little more than mediocrities with almost no genuine feeling for what makes painting a great art. The real attractiveness of both lies entirely outside the sphere of pure art, in the realms of "genre" illustration. And here the likeness between them ends; within their common ground they differed widely.

Benozzo Gozzoli

Benozzo was gifted with a rare facility not only of execution but of invention, with a spontaneity, a freshness, a liveliness in telling a story that wake the child in us, and the lover of the fairy tale. Later

in life, his more precious gifts deserted him, but who wants to resist the fascination of his early works, painted, as they seem, by a Fra Angelico who had forgotten heaven and become enamoured of the earth and the spring-time? In his Riccardi Palace frescoes, he has sunk already to portraying the Florentine apprentice's dream of a holiday in the country on St. John's Day; but what a "naïf" ideal of luxury and splendour it is! With these, the glamour in which he saw the world began to fade away from him, and in his Pisan frescoes we have, it is true, many a quaint bit of "genre" (superior to Teniers only because of superior associations), but never again the fairy tale. And as the better recedes, it is replaced by the worse, by the bane of all "genre" painting, non-significant detail, and positive bad taste. Have London or New York or Berlin worse to show us than the jumble of buildings in his ideal of a great city, his picture of Babylon? It may be said he here continues mediæval tradition, which is quite true, but this very fact indicates his real place, which, in spite of his adopting so many of the fifteenth-century improvements, is not with the artists of the Renaissance, but with the storytellers and costumed fairy-tale painters of the transition, with Spinello Aretino and Gentile da Fabriano, for instance. And yet, once in a while, he renders a head with such character, or a movement with such ease that we wonder whether he had not in him, after all, the making of a real artist.

Ghirlandaio

Ghirlandaio was born to far more science and cunning in painting than was current in Benozzo's

early years, and all that industry, all that love of his occupation, all that talent even, can do for a man, they did for him; but unfortunately he had not a spark of genius. He appreciated Masaccio's tactile values, Pollaiuolo's movement, Verrocchio's effects of light, and succeeded in so sugaring down what he adopted from these great masters that the superior philistine of Florence could say: "There now is a man who knows as much as any of the great men, but can give me something that I can really enjoy!" Bright colour, pretty faces, good likenesses, and the obvious everywhere--attractive and delightful, it must be granted, but, except in certain single figures, never significant. Let us glance a moment at his famous frescoes in Santa Maria Novella. To begin with, they are so undecorative that, in spite of the tone and surface imparted to them by four centuries, they still suggest so many "tableaux vivants" pushed into the wall side by side, and in tiers. Then the compositions are as overfilled as the sheets of an illustrated newspaper--witness the "Massacre of the Innocents," a scene of such magnificent artistic possibilities. Finally, irrelevant episodes and irrelevant groups of portraits do what they can to distract our attention from all higher significance. Look at the "Birth of John"; Ginevra dei Benci stands there, in the very foreground, staring out at you as stiff as if she had a photographer's iron behind her head. An even larger group of Florentine housewives in all their finery disfigures the "Birth of the Virgin," which is further spoiled by a "bas relief" to show off the painter's acquaintance with the antique, and by the figure of the serving maid who pours out water, with the rush of a whirlwind in her skirts--this to show off skill in the rendering of movement. Yet elsewhere, as in his "Epiphany" in the Uffizi, Ghirlandaio has undeniable charm, and occasionally in portraits his talent, here at its highest, rises above mediocrity, in one instance, the fresco of Sassetti in Santa Trinità, becoming almost genius.

Section XI

Leonardo

All that Giotto and Masaccio had attained in the rendering of tactile values, all that Fra Angelico or Filippo had achieved in expression, all that Pollaiuolo had accomplished in movement, or Verrocchio in light and shade, Leonardo, without the faintest trace of that tentativeness, that painfulness of effort which characterised his immediate precursors, equalled or surpassed. Outside Velasquez, and perhaps, when at their best, Rembrandt and Degas, we shall seek in vain for tactile values so stimulating and so convincing as those of his "Mona Lisa"; outside Degas, we shall not find such supreme mastery over the art of movement as in the unfinished "Epiphany" in the Uffizi; and if Leonardo has been left far behind as a painter of light, no one has succeeded in conveying by means of light and shade a more penetrating feeling of mystery and awe than he in his "Virgin of the Rocks." Add to all this, a feeling for beauty and significance that have scarcely ever been approached. Where again youth so poignantly attractive, manhood so potently virile, old age so dignified and possessed of the world's secrets! Who like Leonardo has depicted the mother's happiness in her child and the child's joy in being alive; who like Leonardo has portrayed the timidity, the newness to experience, the delicacy and refinement of maidenhood; or the enchantress intuitions, the inexhaustible fascination of the woman in her years of mastery? Look at his many sketches for Madonnas, look at his profile drawing of Isabella d'Este, or at the "Belle Joconde", and see whether elsewhere you find their equals. Leonardo is the one artist of whom it may be said with perfect literalness: Nothing that he touched but turned into a thing of eternal beauty. Whether it be the cross-section of a skull, the structure of a weed, or a study of muscles, he, with his feeling for line and for light and shade, forever transmuted it into life-communicating values; and all without intention, for most of these magical sketches were dashed off to illustrate purely scientific matter, which alone absorbed his mind at the moment.

And just as his art is life-communicating as is that of scarcely another, so the contemplation of his personality is life-enhancing as that of scarcely any other man. Think that great though he was as a painter, he was no less renowned as a sculptor and architect, musician and improviser, and that all artistic occupations whatsoever were in his career but moments snatched from the pursuit of theoretical and

practical knowledge. It would seem as if there were scarcely a field of modern science but he either foresaw it in vision, or clearly anticipated it, scarcely a realm of fruitful speculation of which he was not a freeman; and as if there were hardly a form of human energy which he did not manifest. And all that he demanded of life was the chance to be useful! Surely, such a man brings us the gladdest of all tidings--the wonderful possibilities of the human family, of whose chances we all partake.

Painting, then, was to Leonardo so little of a preoccupation that we must regard it as merely a mode of expression used at moments by a man of universal genius, who recurred to it only when he had no more absorbing occupation, and only when it could express what nothing else could, the highest spiritual through the highest material significance.

And great though his mastery over his craft, his feeling for significance was so much greater that it caused him to linger long over his pictures, labouring to render the significance he felt but which his hand could not reproduce, so that he rarely finished them. We thus have lost in quantity, but have we lost in quality? Could a mere painter, or even a mere artist, have seen and felt as Leonardo? We may well doubt.

We are too apt to regard a universal genius as a number of ordinary brains somehow conjoined in one skull, and not always on the most neighbourly terms. We forget that genius means mental energy, and that a Leonardo, for the self-same reason that prevents his being merely a painter--the fact that it does not exhaust a hundredth part of his energy--will, when he does turn to painting, bring to bear a power of seeing, feeling, and rendering, as utterly above that of the ordinary painter as the "Mona Lisa" is above, let us say, Andrea del Sarto's "Portrait of his Wife." No, let us not join in the reproaches made to

Leonardo for having painted so little; because he had much more to do than to paint, he has left all of us heirs to one or two of the supremest works of art ever created.

Section XII

Botticelli

Never pretty, scarcely ever charming or even attractive; rarely correct in drawing, and seldom satisfactory in colour; in types, ill-favoured; in feeling acutely intense and even dolorous--what is it then that makes Sandro Botticelli so irresistible that nowadays we may have no alternative but to worship or abhor him? The secret is this, that in European painting there has never again been an artist so indifferent to representation and so intent upon presentation. Educated in a period of triumphant naturalism, he plunged at first into mere representation with almost self-obliterating earnestness; the pupil of Fra Filippo, he was trained to a love of spiritual "genre"; himself gifted with strong instincts for the significant, he was able to create such a type of the thinker as in his fresco of St. Augustin; yet in his best years he left everything, even spiritual significance, behind him, and abandoned himself to the presentation of those qualities alone which in a picture are "directly" life-communicating, and life-enhancing. Those of us who care for nothing in the work of art but what it represents, are either powerfully attracted or repelled by his unhackneyed types and quivering feeling; but if we are such as have an imagination of touch and of movement that it is easy to stimulate, we feel a pleasure in Botticelli that few, if any, other artists can give us. Long after we have exhausted both the intensest sympathies and the most violent antipathies with which the representative elements in his pictures may have inspired us, we are only on the verge of fully appreciating his real genius. This in its happiest moments is an unparalleled power of perfectly combining values of touch with values of movement.

Look, for instance, at Botticelli's "Venus Rising from the Sea." Throughout, the tactile imagination is roused to a keen activity, by itself almost as life heightening as music. But the power of music is even surpassed where, as in the goddess' mane-like tresses of hair fluttering to the wind, not in disorderly rout but in masses yielding only after resistance, the movement is directly life-communicating. The entire

picture presents us with the quintessence of all that is pleasurable to our imagination of touch and of movement. How we revel in the force and freshness of the wind, in the life of the wave! And such an appeal he always makes. His subject may be fanciful, as in the "Realm of Venus" (the "Spring"); religious, as in the Sixtine Chapel frescoes or in the "Coronation of the Virgin"; political, as in the recently discovered "Pallas Taming a Centaur"; or even crudely allegorical, as in the Louvre frescoes,--no matter how unpropitious, how abstract the idea, the vivid appeal to our tactile sense, the life-communicating movement is always there. Indeed, at times it seems that the less artistic the theme, the more artistic the fulfilment, the painter being impelled to give the utmost values of touch and movement to just those figures which are liable to be read off as mere empty symbols. Thus, on the figure representing political disorder--the Centaur--in the "Pallas," Botticelli has lavished his most intimate gifts. He constructs the torso and flanks in such a way that every line, every indentation, every boss appeals so vividly to the sense of touch that our fingers feel as if they had everywhere been in contact with his body, while his face gives to a still heightened degree this convincing sense of reality, every line functioning perfectly for the osseous structure of brow, nose, and cheeks. As to the hair--imagine shapes having the supreme life of line you may see in the contours of licking flames, and yet possessed of all the plasticity of something which caresses the hand that models it to its own desire!

Lineal decoration

In fact, the mere subject, and even representation in general, was so indifferent to Botticelli, that he appears almost as if haunted by the idea of communicating the "unembodied" values of touch and movement. Now there is a way of rendering even tactile values with almost no body, and that is by translating them as faithfully as may be into values of movement. For instance:--we want to render the roundness of a wrist without the slightest touch of either light or shade; we simply give the movement of the wrist's outline and the movement of the drapery as it falls over it, and the roundness is communicated

to us almost entirely in terms of movement. But let us go one step further. Take this line that renders the roundness of the wrist, or a more obvious example, the lines that render the movements of the tossing hair, the fluttering draperies, and the dancing waves in the "Birth of Venus"--take these lines alone with all their power of stimulating our imagination of movement, and what do we have? Pure values of movement abstracted, unconnected with any representation whatever. This kind of line, then, being the quintessence of movement, has, like the essential elements in all the arts, a power of stimulating our imagination and of directly communicating life. Well! Imagine an art made up entirely of these quintessences of movement-values, and you will have something that holds the same relation to representation that music holds to speech--and this art exists, and is called lineal decoration. In this art of arts Sandro Botticelli may have had rivals in Japan and elsewhere in the East, but in Europe never. To its demands he was ready to sacrifice everything that habits acquired under Filippo and Pollaiuolo,--and his employers!--would permit. The representative element was for him a mere "libretto": he was happiest when his subject lent itself to translation into what may be called a lineal symphony. And to this symphony everything was made to yield; tactile values were translated into values of movement, and, for the same reason--to prevent the drawing of the eye inward, to permit it to devote itself to the rhythm of the line--the backgrounds were either entirely suppressed or kept as simple as possible. Colour also, with almost a contempt for its representative function, Botticelli entirely subordinated to his lineal scheme, compelling it to draw attention to the line, rather than, as is usual, away from it.

This is the explanation of the value put upon Botticelli's masterpieces. In some of his later works, such as the Dresden "predelle", we have, it is true, bacchanals rather than symphonies of line, and in many of his earlier paintings, in the "Fortezza", for instance, the harness and trappings have so disguised Pegasus that we scarcely know him from a cart horse. But the painter of the "Venus Rising from the Sea," of the "Spring," or of the Villa Lemmi frescoes is the greatest artist of lineal design that Europe has ever had.

Section XIII

Popularisers of art

Leonardo and Botticelli, like Michelangelo after them, found imitators but not successors. To communicate more material and spiritual significance than Leonardo, would have taken an artist with deeper feeling for significance; to get more music out of design than Botticelli, would have required a painter with even greater passion for the re-embodiment of the pure essences of touch and movement. There were none such in Florence, and the followers of Botticelli--Leonardo's were all Milanese, and do not here concern us--could but imitate the patterns of their master: the patterns of the face, the patterns of the composition, and the patterns of the line; dragging them down to their own level, sugaring them down to their own palate, slowing them down to their own insensitiveness for what is life-communicating. And although their productions, which were nothing but translations of great man's art into average man's art, became popular, as was inevitable, with the average man of their time, (who comprehended them better and felt more comfortable in their presence than in that of the originals which he respectfully admired but did not so thoroughly enjoy), nevertheless we need not dwell on these popularisers nor on their popularisations—not even on Filippino, with his touch of consumptive delicacy, nor Raffaellino del Garbo, with his glints of never-to-be-fulfilled promise.

Fra Bartolommeo

Before approaching the one man of genius left in Florence after Botticelli and Leonardo, before

speaking of Michelangelo, the man in whom all that was most peculiar and much that was greatest in the striving of Florentine art found its fulfilment, let us turn for a moment to a few painters who, just because they were men of manifold talent, might elsewhere almost have become masters. Fra Bartolommeo, Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, and Bronzino were perhaps no less gifted as artists than Palma, Bonifazio Veronese, Lotto, and Tintoretto; but their talents, instead of being permitted to flower naturally, were scorched by the passion for showing off dexterity, blighted by academic ideals, and uprooted by the whirlwind force of Michelangelo.

Fra Bartolommeo, who in temperament was delicate, refined, graceful, and as a painter had a miniaturist's feeling for the dainty, was induced to desert his lovely women, his exquisite landscape, and his gentleness of expression for figures constructed mechanically on a colossal scale, or for effects of the round at any cost. And as evil is more obvious than good, Bartolommeo, the painter of that masterpiece of colour and light and shade, of graceful movement and charming feeling, the "Madonna with the Baptist and St. Stephen" in the Cathedral at Lucca, Bartolommeo, the dainty deviser of Mr. Mond's tiny "Nativity," Bartolommeo, the artificer of a hundred masterpieces of pen drawing, is almost unknown; and to most people Fra Bartolommeo is a sort of synonym for pomposity. He is known only as the author of physically colossal, spiritually insignificant prophets and apostles, or, perchance, as the painter of pitch-dark altar-pieces: this being the reward of devices to obtain mere relief.

Andrea del Sarto

Andrea del Sarto approached perhaps as closely to a Giorgione or a Titian as could a Florentine, ill at ease in the neighbourhood of Leonardo and Michelangelo. As an artist he was, it is true, not endowed with the profoundest sense for the significant, yet within the sphere of common humanity who has produced anything more genial than his "Portrait of a Lady"--probably his wife--with a Petrarch in her hands? Where out of Venetia can we find portraits so simple,

so frank, and yet so interpretive as his "Sculptor," or as his various portraits of himself--these, by the way, an autobiography as complete as any in existence, and tragic as few? Almost Venetian again is his "St. James" caressing children, a work of the sweetest feeling. Even in colour effect, and technique, how singularly close to the best Venetian painting in his "Dispute about the Trinity"--what blacks and whites, what greys and purplish browns! And in addition, tactile values peculiar to Florence--what a back St. Sebastian's! But in a work of scarcely less technical merit, the "Madonna of the Harpies," we already feel the man not striving to get the utmost out of himself, but panting for the grand and magnificent. Even here, he remains almost a great artist, because his natural robustness comes to his rescue; but the "Madonna" is too obviously statuesque, and, good saints, pray why all these draperies?

The obviously statuesque and draperies were Andrea's devices for keeping his head above water in the rising tide of the Michelangelesque. As you glance in sequence at the Annunziata frescoes, on the whole so full of vivacity, gaiety, and genuine delight in life, you see from one fresco to another the increased attention given to draperies. In the Scalzo series, otherwise masterpieces of tactile values, the draperies do their utmost to smother the figures. Most of these paintings are closed in with ponderous forms which have no other purpose than to serve as a frame, and as clothes-horses for draperies: witness the scene of Zacharias in the temple, wherein none of the bystanders dare move for fear of disturbing their too obviously arranged folds.

Thus by constantly sacrificing first spiritual, and then material significance to pose and draperies, Andrea loses all feeling for the essential in art. What a sad spectacle is his "Assumption," wherein the Apostles, the Virgin herself, have nothing better to do than to show off draperies! Instead of feeling, as in the presence of Titian's "Assunta," wrapt to heaven, you gaze at a number of tailor's men, each showing how a stuff you are thinking of trying looks on the back, or in a certain effect of light. But let us not end on this note; let us bear in mind that, despite all his faults, Andrea painted the one "Last Supper" which can be looked at with pleasure after Leonardo's.

Pontormo

Pontormo, who had it in him to be a decorator and portrait-painter of the highest rank, was led astray by his awe-struck admiration for Michelangelo, and ended as an academic constructor of monstrous nudes. What he could do when expressing "himself", we see in the lunette at Poggio a Caiano, as design, as colour, as fancy, the freshest, gayest, most appropriate mural decoration now remaining in Italy; what he could do as a portrait-painter, we see in his wonderfully decorative panel of Cosimo dei Medici at San Marco, or in his portrait of a "Lady with a Dog" (at Frankfort), perhaps the first portrait ever painted in which the sitter's social position was insisted upon as much as the personal character. What Pontormo sank to, we see in such a riot of meaningless nudes, all caricatures of Michelangelo, as his "Martyrdom of Forty Saints."

Bronzino

Bronzino, Pontormo's close follower, had none of his master's talent as a decorator, but happily much of his power as a portrait-painter. Would he had never attempted anything else! The nude without material or spiritual significance, with no beauty of design or colour, the nude simply because it was the nude, was Bronzino's ideal in composition, and the result is his "Christ in Limbo." But as a portrait-painter, he took up the note struck by his master and continued it, leaving behind him a series of portraits which not only had their effect in determining the character of Court painting all over Europe, but, what is more to the point, a series of portraits most of which are works of art. As painting, it is true, they are hard, and often timid; but their air of distinction, their interpretive qualities, have not often been surpassed. In his Uffizi portraits of Eleanora di Toledo, of Prince Ferdinand, of the Princess Maria, we seem to see the prototypes of Velasquez' queens, princes, and princesses: and for a fine example of dignified rendering of character, look in the Sala Baroccio of

the Uffizi at a bust of a young woman with a missal in her hand.

Section XIV

Michelangelo

The great Florentine artists, as we have seen, were, with scarcely an exception, bent upon rendering the material significance of visible things. This, little though they may have formulated it, was the conscious aim of most of them; and in proportion as they emancipated themselves from ecclesiastical dominion, and found among their employers men capable of understanding them, their aim became more and more conscious and their striving more energetic. At last appeared the man who was the pupil of nobody, the heir of everybody, who felt profoundly and powerfully what to his precursors had been vague instinct, who saw and expressed the meaning of it all. The seed that produced him had already flowered into a Giotto, and once again into a Masaccio; in him, the last of his race, born in conditions artistically most propitious, all the energies remaining in his stock were concentrated, and in him Florentine art had its logical culmination.

Anthropomorphism in art

Michelangelo had a sense for the materially significant as great as Giotto's or Masaccio's, but he possessed means of rendering, inherited from Donatello, Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio and Leonardo,--

means that had been undreamt of by Giotto or even by Masaccio. Add to this that he saw clearly what before him had been felt only dimly, that there was no other such instrument for conveying material significance as the human nude. This fact is as closely dependent on the general conditions of realising objects as tactile values are on the psychology of sight. We realise objects when we perfectly translate them into terms of our own states, our own feelings. So obviously true is this, that even the least poetically inclined among us, because we keenly realise the movement of a railway train, to take one example out of millions, speak of it as “going” or “running”, instead of “rolling on its wheels”, thus being no less guilty of anthropomorphising than the most unregenerate savages. Of this same fallacy we are guilty every time we think of anything whatsoever with the least warmth--we are lending this thing some human attributes. The more we endow it with human attributes, the less we merely know it, the more we realise it, the more does it approach the work of art. Now there is one and only one object in the visible universe which we need not anthropomorphise to realise--and that is man himself. His movements, his actions, are the only things we realise without any myth-making effort--directly. Hence, there is no visible object of such artistic possibilities as the human body; nothing with which we are so familiar; nothing, therefore, in which we so rapidly perceive changes; nothing, then, which if represented so as to be realised more quickly and vividly than in life, will produce its effect with such velocity and power, and so strongly confirm our sense of capacity for living.

Value of the nude in art

Values of touch and movement, we remember, are the specifically artistic qualities in figure painting (at least, as practised by the Florentines), for it is through them chiefly that painting directly heightens life. Now while it remains true that tactile values can, as Giotto and Masaccio have forever established, be admirably rendered on the draped figure, yet drapery is a hindrance, and, at the best, only a way out of a difficulty, for we “feel” it masking the really significant, which is “the form underneath”. A mere painter, one who is satisfied to reproduce what

everybody sees, and to paint for the fun of painting, will scarcely comprehend this feeling. His only significant is the obvious--in a figure, the face and the clothing, as in most of the portraits manufactured nowadays. The artist, even when compelled to paint draped figures, will force the drapery to render the nude, in other words the material significance of the human body. But how much more clearly will this significance shine out, how much more convincingly will the character manifest itself, when between its perfect rendering and the artist nothing intervenes! And this perfect rendering is to be accomplished with the nude only.

If draperies are a hindrance to the conveyance of tactile values, they make the perfect rendering of movement next to impossible. To realise the play of muscle everywhere, to get the full sense of the various pressures and resistances, to receive the direct inspiration of the energy expended, we must have the nude; for here alone can we watch those tautnesses of muscle and those stretchings and relaxings and rippings of skin which, translated into similar strains on our own persons, make us fully realise movement. Here alone the translation, owing to the multitude and the clearness of the appeals made, is instantaneous, and the consequent sense of increased capacity almost as great as can be attained; while in the draped figure we miss all the appeal of visible muscle and skin, and realise movement only after a slow translation of certain functional outlines, so that the sense of capacity which we receive from the perception of movement is increased but slightly.

We are now able to understand why every art whose chief preoccupation is the human figure must have the nude for its chief interest; why, also, the nude is the most absorbing problem of classic art at all times. Not only is it the best vehicle for all that in art which is directly life-confirming and life-enhancing, but it is itself the most significant object in the human world. The first person since the great days of Greek sculpture to comprehend fully the identity of the nude with great figure art, was Michelangelo. Before him, it had been studied for scientific purposes--as an aid in rendering the draped

figure. He saw that it was an end in itself, and the final purpose of his art. For him the nude and art were synonymous. Here lies the secret of his successes and his failures.

Michelangelo

First, his successes. Nowhere outside of the best Greek art shall we find, as in Michelangelo's works, forms whose tactile values so increase our sense of capacity, whose movements are so directly communicated and inspiring. Other artists have had quite as much feeling for tactile values alone,--Masaccio, for instance; others still have had at least as much sense of movement and power of rendering it,--Leonardo, for example; but no other artist of modern times, having at all his control over the materially significant, has employed it as Michelangelo did, on the one subject where its full value can be manifested--the nude. Hence of all the achievements of modern art, his are the most invigorating.

Surely not often is our imagination of touch roused as by his Adam in the "Creation," by his Eve in the "Temptation," or by his many nudes in the same ceiling of the Sixtine Chapel,--there for no other purpose, be it noted, than their direct tonic effect! Nor is it less rare to quaff such draughts of unadulterated energy as we receive from the "God Creating Adam," the "Boy Angel" standing by Isaiah, or--to choose one or two instances from his drawings (in their own kind the greatest in existence)--the "Gods Shooting at a Mark" or the "Hercules and the Lion."

And to this feeling for the materially significant and all this power of conveying it, to all this more narrowly artistic capacity, Michelangelo joined an ideal of beauty and force, a vision of a glorious but possible humanity, which, again, has never had its like in modern times. Manliness, robustness, effectiveness, the fulfilment of our dream of a great soul inhabiting a beautiful body, we shall encounter nowhere else so frequently as among the figures in the Sixtine Chapel. Michelangelo completed what Masaccio had begun, the creation of the type of man best fitted to subdue and control the earth, and, who knows! perhaps more than the earth.

Last works of Michelangelo

But unfortunately, though born and nurtured in a

world where his feeling for the nude and his ideal of humanity could be appreciated, he passed most of his life in the midst of tragic disasters, and while yet in the fulness of his vigour, in the midst of his most creative years, he found himself alone, perhaps the greatest, but alas! also the last of the giants born so plentifully during the fifteenth century. He lived on in a world he could not but despise, in a world which really could no more employ him than it could understand him. He was not allowed, therefore, to busy himself where he felt most drawn by his genius, and, much against his own strongest impulses, he was obliged to expend his energy upon such subjects as the "Last Judgment." His later works all show signs of the altered conditions, first in an overflow into the figures he was creating of the scorn and bitterness he was feeling, then in the lack of harmony between his genius and what he was compelled to execute. His passion was the nude, his ideal power. But what outlet for such a passion, what expression for such an ideal could there be in subjects like the "Last Judgment," or the "Crucifixion of Peter"--subjects which the Christian world imperatively demanded should incarnate the fear of the humble and the self-sacrifice of the patient?

Now humility and patience were feelings as unknown to Michelangelo as to Dante before him, or, for that matter, to any other of the world's creative geniuses at any time. Even had he felt them, he had no means of expressing them, for his nudes could convey a sense of power, not of weakness; of terror, not of dread; of despair, but not of submission. And terror the giant nudes of the "Last Judgment" do feel, but it is not terror of the Judge, who, being in no wise different from the others, in spite of his omnipotent gesture, seems to be "announcing" rather than "willing" what the bystanders, his fellows, could not "unwill". As the representation of the moment before the universe disappears in chaos--Gods huddling together for the "Götterdämmerung"--the "Last Judgment" is as grandly conceived as possible: but when the crash comes, none will survive it, no, not even God. Michelangelo therefore failed in his conception of the subject, and could not but fail. But where else in the whole world of art shall we receive such blasts of energy as from this giant's dream, or, if you will, nightmare? For kindred reasons, the "Crucifixion of Peter" is a failure. Art can be only life-communicating and life-enhancing. If it treats of pain and death, these must always appear as manifestations and as results only of living resolutely and energetically. What chance is there, I ask, for this, artistically the only possible treatment, in the

representation of a man crucified with his head downwards? Michelangelo could do nothing but make the bystanders, the executioners, all the more life-communicating, and therefore inevitably more sympathetic! No wonder he failed here! What a tragedy, by the way, that the one subject perfectly cut out for his genius, the one subject which required none but genuinely artistic treatment, his "Bathers," executed forty years before these last works, has disappeared, leaving but scant traces! Yet even these suffice to enable the competent student to recognise that this composition must have been the greatest masterpiece in figure art of modern times.

That Michelangelo had faults of his own is undeniable. As he got older, and his genius, lacking its proper outlets, tended to stagnate and thicken, he fell into exaggerations--exaggerations of power into brutality, of tactile values into feats of modelling. No doubt he was also at times as indifferent to representation as Botticelli! But while there is such a thing as movement, there is no such thing as tactile values without representation. Yet he seems to have dreamt of presenting nothing but tactile values: hence his many drawings with only the torso adequately treated, the rest unheeded. Still another result from his passion for tactile values. I have already suggested that Giotto's types were so massive because such figures most easily convey values of touch.

Michelangelo tended to similar exaggerations, to making shoulders, for instance, too broad and too bossy, simply because they make thus a more powerful appeal to the tactile imagination. Indeed, I venture to go even farther, and suggest that his faults in all the arts, sculpture no less than painting, and architecture no less than sculpture, are due to this self-same predilection for salient projections. But the lover of the figure arts for what in them is genuinely artistic and not merely ethical, will in Michelangelo, even at his worst, get such pleasures as, excepting a few, others, even at their best, rarely give him.

Constant aims of Florentine art

In closing, let us note what results clearly even from this brief account of the Florentine school, namely that, although no Florentine merely took up and

continued a predecessor's work, nevertheless all, from first to last, fought for the same cause. There is no opposition between Giotto and Michelangelo. The best energies of the first, of the last, and of all the intervening great Florentine artists were persistently devoted to the rendering of tactile values, or of movement, or of both. Now successful grappling with problems of form and of movement is at the bottom of all the higher arts; and because of this fact, Florentine painting, despite its many faults, is, after Greek sculpture, the most serious figure art in existence.

Bernhard Berenson

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07. Next issue: Venetian art and criticism

CFP: Venetian art and criticism

Submission deadline 15 July 2011

This is an open call for papers for the third *Art history supplement (AHS)*. The proposed theme, but not limited to, is “**Venetian art and criticism.**” Submission deadline 15 July 2011.

AHS publishes material, dealing with all time periods and/or methodologies, media (incl. cinema, photography, music), techniques, debates within the field of art history.

Contributions to *AHS* from any other science or discipline (humanitarian or not) corresponding to visual culture or representations of it are more than welcome.

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03. Art and socialism, by Roger Fry

I AM not a Socialist, as I understand that word, nor can I pretend to have worked out those complex estimates of economic possibility which are needed before one can endorse the hopeful forecasts of Lady Warwick, Mr Money, and Mr Wells. What I propose to do here is first to discuss what effect plutocracy, such as it is to-day, has had of late, and is likely to have in the near future, upon one of the things which I should like to imagine continuing upon our planet — namely, art. And then briefly to prognosticate its chances under such a regime as my colleagues have sketched.

As I understand it, art is one of the chief organs of what, for want of a better word; I must call the spiritual life. It both stimulates and controls those indefinable overtones of the material life of man which all of us at moments feel to have a quality of permanence and I reality that does not belong to the rest of our experience. Nature demands with no uncertain voice that the physical needs of the body shall be satisfied first; but we feel that our real human life only begins at the point where that is accomplished, that the man who works at some uncreative and uncongenial toil merely to earn enough food to enable him to continue to work has not, properly speaking, a human life at all.

It is the argument of commercialism, as it once was of aristocracy, that the accumulation of surplus wealth in a few hands enables this spiritual life to maintain its existence, that no really valuable or useless work (for from this point of view only useless work has value) could exist in the community without such accumulations of wealth. The argument has been employed for the disinterested work of scientific research. A doctor of naturally liberal and generous impulses told me that he was becoming a reactionary simply because he feared that public bodies would never give the money necessary for research with anything like the same generosity as is now shown by the great plutocrats. But Sir Ray Lankester does not find that generosity sufficient, and is prepared at least to consider a State more ample-spirited.

The situation as regards art and as regards the disinterested love of truth is so similar that we might expect this argument in favour of a plutocratic social order to hold equally well for both art and science, and that the artist would be a fervent upholder of the present system. As a matter of fact, the more representative artists have rarely been such, and not a few, though working their life long for the plutocracy, have been vehement Socialists.

Despairing of the conditions due to modern commercialism, it is not unnatural that lovers of beauty should look back with nostalgia to the age when society was controlled by a landed aristocracy. I believe, however, that from the point of view of the encouragement of great creative art there is not much difference between an aristocracy and a plutocracy. The aristocrat usually had taste, the plutocrat frequently has not. Now taste is of two kinds, the first consisting in the negative avoidance of all that is ill-considered and discordant, the other positive and a by-product; it is that harmony which always results from the expression of intense and disinterested emotion. The aristocrat, by means of his good taste of the negative kind, was able to come to terms with the artist; the plutocrat has not. But both alike desire to buy something which is incommensurate with money. Both want art to be a background to their radiant self-consciousness. They want to buy beauty as they want to buy love; and the painter, picture-dealer, and the pander try perennially to persuade them that it is possible. But living beauty cannot be bought; it must be won. I have said that the aristocrat, by his taste, by his feeling for the accidentals of beauty, did manage to get on to

some kind of terms with the artist. Hence the art of the eighteenth century, an art that is prone before the distinguished patron, subtly and deliciously flattering and yet always fine. In contrast to that the art of the nineteenth century is coarse, turbulent, clumsy. It marks the beginning of a revolt. The artist just managed to let himself be coaxed and cajoled by the aristocrat, but when the aristocratic was succeeded by the plutocratic patron with less conciliatory manners and no taste, the artist rebelled ; and the history of art in the nineteenth century is the history of a band of heroic Ishmaelites, with no secure place in the social system, with nothing to support them in the unequal struggle but a dim sense of a new idea, the idea of the freedom of art from all trammels and tyrannies.

The place that the artists left vacant at the plutocrat's table had to be filled, and it was filled by a race new in the history of the world, a race for whom no name has yet been found, a race of pseudo-artists. As the prostitute professes to sell love, so these gentlemen professed to sell beauty, and they and their patrons rollicked good- humouredly through the Victorian era. They adopted the name and something of the manner of artists; they intercepted not only the money, but the titles and fame and glory which were intended for those whom they had supplanted. But, while they were yet feasting, there came an event which seemed at the time of no importance, but which was destined to change ultimately the face of things, the exhibition of ancient art at Manchester in 1857. And with this came Ruskin's address on the Political Economy of Art, a work which surprises by its prophetic foresight when we read it half a century later. These two things were the Mene Tekel of the orgy of Victorian Philistinism. The plutocrat saw through the deception; it was not beauty the pseudo-artist sold him, any more than it was love which the prostitute gave. He turned from it in disgust and decided that the only beauty he could buy was the dead beauty of the past. Thereupon set in the worship of patine and the age of forgery and the detection of forgery. I once remarked to a rich man that a statue by Rodin might be worthy even of his collection. He replied, "Show me a Rodin with the patine of the fifteenth century, and I will buy it."

Patine, then, the adventitious material beauty which age alone can give, has come to be the object of a reverence greater than that devoted to the idea which is enshrined within the work of art. People are right to admire patine. Nothing is more beautiful than gilded bronze of which time has taken toll until it is nothing but a faded shimmering splendour over depths of inscrutable gloom; nothing finer than the dull glow which Pentelic marble has gathered from past centuries of sunlight and warm Mediterranean breezes. Patine is good, but it is a surface charm added to the essential beauty of expression; its beauty is literally skin-deep. It can never come into being or exist in or for itself; no patine can make a bad work good, or the forgers would be justified. It is an adjectival and ancillary beauty scarcely worthy of our prolonged contemplation.

There is to the philosopher something pathetic in the Plutocrat's worship of patine. It is, as it were, a compensation for his own want of it. On himself all the rough thumb and chisel marks of his maker — and he is self-made — stand as yet unpolished and raw; but his furniture, at least, shall have the distinction of age-long acquaintance with good manners.

But the net result of all this is that the artist has nothing to hope from the plutocrat. To him we must be grateful indeed for that brusque disillusionment of the real artist, the real artist who might have rubbed along uneasily for yet another century with his predecessor, the aristocrat. Let us be grateful to him for this; but we need not look to him for further benefits, and if we decide to keep him the artist must be content to be paid after he is dead and vicariously in the person of an art-dealer. The artist must be content to look on while sums are given for dead beauty, the tenth part of which, properly directed, would irrigate whole nations and stimulate once more the production of vital artistic expression.

I would not wish to appear to blame the plutocrat. He has often honestly done his best for art; the trouble is not of his making more than of the artist's, and the misunderstanding between art and commerce is bound to be complete. The artist, however mean and avaricious he may appear, knows that he cannot really sell himself for money any more than the philosopher or the scientific investigator can sell himself for money. He takes money in the hope that he may secure the opportunity for the free functioning of his creative power. If the patron could give him that instead of money he would bless him; but he cannot, and so he tries to get him to work not quite freely for money ; and in revenge the artist indulges in all manner of insolences, even perhaps in sharp practices, which make the patron feel, with some justification, that he is the victim of ingratitude and wanton caprice. It is impossible that the artist should work for the plutocrat; he must work for himself, because it is only by so doing that he can perform the function for which he exists ; it is only by working for himself that he can work for mankind.

If, then, the particular kind of accumulation of surplus wealth which we call plutocracy has failed, as surely it has signally failed, to stimulate the creative power of the imagination, what disposition of wealth might be conceived that would succeed better? First of all, a greater distribution of wealth, with a lower standard of ostentation, would, I think, do a great deal to improve things without any great change in other conditions. It is not enough known that the patronage which really counts to-day is exercised by quite small and humble people. These people with a few hundreds a year exercise a genuine patronage by buying pictures at ten, twenty, or occasionally thirty pounds, with real insight and understanding, thereby enabling the young Ishmaelite to live and function from the age of twenty to thirty or so, when perhaps he becomes known to richer buyers, those experienced spenders of money who are always more cautious, more anxious to buy an investment than a picture. These poor, intelligent first patrons to whom I allude belong mainly to the professional classes ; they have none of the pretensions of the plutocrat and none of his ambitions. The work of art is not for them, as for him, a decorative backcloth to his stage, but an idol and an inspiration. Merely to increase the number and potency of these people would already accomplish much; and this is to be noticed, that if wealth were more evenly distributed, if no one had a great deal of wealth, those who really cared for art would become the sole patrons, since for all it would be an appreciable sacrifice, and for none an impossibility. The man who only buys pictures when he has as many motor-cars as he can conceivably want would drop out as a patron altogether.

But even this would only foster the minor and private arts; and what the history of art definitely elucidates is that the greatest art has always been communal, the expression— in highly individualised ways, no doubt — of common aspirations and ideals.

Let us suppose, then, that society were so arranged that considerable surplus wealth lay in the hands of public bodies, both national and local ; can we have any reasonable hope that they would show more skill in carrying out the delicate task of stimulating and using the creative power of the artist ?

The immediate prospect is certainly not encouraging. Nothing, for instance, is more deplorable than to watch the patronage of our provincial museums. The gentlemen who administer these public funds naturally have not realised so acutely as private buyers the lesson so admirably taught at Christie's, that pseudo or Royal- Academic art is a bad investment. Nor is it better if we turn to national patronage. In Great Britain, at least, we cannot get a postage stamp or a penny even respectably designed, much less a public monument. Indeed, the tradition that all public British art shall be crassly mediocre and inexpressive is so firmly rooted that it seems to have almost the prestige of constitutional precedent. Nor will any one who has watched a committee commissioning a presentation portrait, or even buying an old master, be in danger of taking too optimistic a view. With

rare and shining exceptions, committees seem to be at the mercy of the lowest common denominator of their individual natures, which is dominated by fear of criticism; and fear and its attendant, compromise, are bad masters of the arts.

Speaking recently at Liverpool, Mr. Bernard Shaw placed the present situation as regards public art in its true light. He declared that the corruption of taste and the emotional insincerity of the mass of the people had gone so far that any picture which pleased more than ten per cent, of the population should be immediately burned. . . .

This, then, is the fundamental fact we have to face. And it is this that gives us pause when we try to construct any conceivable system of public patronage.

For the modern artist puts the question of any socialistic— or, indeed, of any completely ordered — state in its acutest form. He demands as an essential to the proper use of his powers a freedom from restraint such as no other workman expects. He must work when he feels inclined; he cannot work to order. Hence his frequent quarrels with the burgher who knows he has to work when he is disinclined, and cannot conceive why the artist should not do likewise. The burgher watches the artist's wayward and apparently quite unmethodical activity, and envies his job. Now, in any Socialistic State, if certain men are licensed to pursue the artistic calling, they are likely to be regarded by the other workers with some envy. There may be a competition for such soft jobs among those who are naturally work-shy, since it will be evident that the artist is not called to account in the same way as other workers.

If we suppose, as seems not unlikely, in view of the immense numbers who become artists in our present social state, that there would be this competition for the artistic work of the community, what methods would be devised to select those required to fill the coveted posts ? Frankly, the history of art in the nineteenth century makes us shudder at the results that would follow. One scarcely knows whether they would be worse if Bumble or the Academy were judge. We only know that under any such conditions none of the artists whose work has ultimately counted in the spiritual development of the race would have been allowed to practise the coveted profession.

There is in truth, as Ruskin pointed out in his “Political Economy of Art,” a gross and wanton waste under the present system. We have thousands of artists who are only so by accident and by name, on the one hand, and certainly many — one cannot tell how many — who have the special gift but have never had the peculiar opportunities which are to-day necessary to allow it to expand and function. But there is, what in an odd way consoles us, a blind chance that the gift and the opportunity may coincide; that Shelley and Browning may have a competence, and Cezanne a farm-house he could retire to. Bureaucratic Socialism would, it seems, take away even this blind chance that mankind may benefit by its least appreciable, most elusive treasures, and would carefully organise the complete suppression of original creative power ; would organise into a universal and all-embracing tyranny the already overweening and disastrous power of endowed official art. For we must face the fact that the average man has two qualities which would make the proper selection of the artist almost impossible. He has, first of all, a touching proclivity to awe-struck admiration of whatever is presented to him as noble by a constituted authority; and, secondly, a complete absence of any immediate reaction to a work of art until his judgment has thus been hypnotised by the voice of authority. Then, and not till then, he sees, or swears he sees, those adorable Emperor's clothes that he is always agape for.

I am speaking, of course, of present conditions, of a populace whose emotional life has been drugged by the sugared poison of pseudo-art, a populace saturated with snobbishness, and regarding art chiefly for its value as a symbol of social distinctions. There have been times

when such a system of public patronage as we are discussing might not have been altogether disastrous. Times when the guilds represented more or less adequately the genuine artistic intelligence of the time; but the creation, first of all, of aristocratic art, and finally of pseudo-art, have brought it about that almost any officially organised system would at the present moment stereotype all the worst features of modern art.

Now, in thus putting forward the extreme difficulties of any system of publicly controlled art, we are emphasising perhaps too much the idea of the artist as a creator of purely ideal and abstract works, as the medium of inspiration and the source of revelation. It is the artist as prophet and priest that we have been considering, the artist who is the articulate soul of mankind. Now, in the present commercial State, at a time when such handiwork as is not admirably fitted to some purely utilitarian purpose has become inanely fatuous and grotesque, the artist in this sense has undoubtedly become of supreme importance as a protestant, as one who proclaims that art is a reasonable function, and one that proceeds by a nice adjustment of means to ends. But if we suppose a state in which all the ordinary objects of daily life — our chairs and tables, our carpets and pottery — expressed something of this reasonableness instead of a crazy and vapid fantasy, the artist as a pure creator might become, not indeed of less importance — rather more — but a less acute necessity to our general living than he is to-day. Something of the sanity and purposefulness of his attitude might conceivably become infused into the work of the ordinary craftsman, something, too, of his creative energy and delight in work. We must, therefore, turn for a moment from the abstractly creative artist to the applied arts and those who practise them.

We are so far obliged to protect ourselves from the implications of modern life that without a special effort it is hard to conceive the enormous quantity of “art” that is annually produced and consumed. For the special purpose of realising it I take the pains to write the succeeding paragraphs in a railway refreshment-room, where I am actually looking at those terribly familiar but fortunately fleeting images which such places afford. And one must remember that public places of this kind merely reflect the average citizen's soul, as expressed in his home.

The space my eye travels over is a small one, but I am appalled at the amount of “art” that it harbours. The window towards which I look is filled in its lower part by stained glass ; within a highly elaborate border, designed by some one who knew the conventions of thirteenth-century glass, is a pattern of yellow and purple vine leaves with bunches of grapes, and flitting about among these many small birds. In front is a lace curtain with patterns taken from at least four centuries and as many countries. On the walls, up to a height of four feet, is a covering of lincrusta walton stamped with a complicated pattern in two colours, with sham silver medal-lions. Above that a moulding but an inch wide, and yet creeping throughout its whole with a degenerate descendant of a Graeco- Roman carved guilloche pattern ; this has evidently been cut but of the wood by machine or stamped out of some composition — its nature is so perfectly concealed that it is hard to say which. Above this is a wall-paper in which an effect of eighteenth-century satin brocade is imitated by shaded staining of the paper. Each of the little refreshment-tables has two cloths, one arranged symmetrically with the table, the other a highly ornate printed cotton arranged “artistically” in a diagonal position. In the centre of each table is a large pot in which every beautiful quality in the material and making of pots has been carefully obliterated by methods each of which implies profound scientific knowledge and great inventive talent. Within each pot is a plant with large dark-green leaves, apparently made of india-rubber. This painful catalogue makes up only a small part of the inventory of the “art” of the restaurant. If I were to go on to tell of the legs of the tables, of the electric-light fittings, of the chairs into the wooden seats of which some tremendous mechanical force has deeply impressed a large distorted anthemion — if I were to tell of all these things, my reader and I might both begin to realise with painful acuteness something of the horrible toil involved in

all this display. Display is indeed the end and explanation of it all. Not one of these things has been made because the maker enjoyed the making; not one has been bought because its contemplation would give any one any pleasure, but solely because each of these things is accepted as a symbol of a particular social status. I say their contemplation can give no one pleasure; they are there because their absence would be resented by the average man who regards a large amount of futile display as in some way inseparable from the conditions of that well-to-do life to which he belongs or aspires to belong. If everything were merely clean and serviceable he would proclaim the place bare and uncomfortable.

The doctor who lines his waiting-room with bad photogravures and worse etchings is acting on exactly the same principle; in short, nearly all our “art” is made, bought, and sold merely for its value as an indication of social status.

Now consider the case of those men whose life-work it is to stimulate this eczematous eruption of pattern on the surface of modern manufactures. They are by far the most numerous “artists” in the country. Each of them has not only learned to draw but has learned by sheer application to put forms together with a similitude of that coherence which creative impulse gives. Probably each of them has somewhere within him something of that creative impulse which is the inspiration and delight of every savage and primitive craftsman; but in these manufacturer's designers the pressure of commercial life has crushed and atrophied that creative impulse completely. Their business is to produce, not expressive design, but dead patterns. They are compelled, therefore, to spend their lives behaving in an entirely idiotic and senseless manner, and that with the certainty that no one will ever get positive pleasure from the result; for one may hazard the statement that until I made the effort just now, no one of the thousands who use the refreshment-rooms ever really looked at the designs.

This question of the creation and consumption of art tends to become more and more pressing. I have shown just now what an immense mass of art is consumed, but this is not the same art as that which the genuine artist produces. The work of the truly creative artist is not merely useless to the social man — it appears to be noxious and inassimilable. Before art can be “consumed” the artistic idea must undergo a process of disinfection. It must have extracted and removed from it all, or nearly all, that makes it aesthetically valuable. What occurs when a great artist creates a new idea is somewhat as follows : We know the process well enough, since it has taken place in the last fifty years. An artist attains to a new vision. He grasps this with such conviction that he is able to express it in his work. Those few people in his immediate surroundings who have the faculty of aesthetic perception become very much excited by the new vision. The average man, on the other hand, lacks this faculty and, moreover, instinctively protects the rounded perfection of his universe of thought and feeling from the intrusion of new experience; in consequence he becomes extremely irritated by the sight of works which appear to him completely un- intelligible. The misunderstanding between this small minority and the public becomes violent. Then some of the more intelligent writers on art recognise that the new idea is really related to past aesthetic expressions which have become recognised. Then a clever artist, without any individual vision of his own, sees the possibility of using a modification of the new idea, makes an ingenious compromise between it and the old, generally accepted notions of art. The public, which has been irritated by its incomprehension of the new idea, finding the compromise just intelligible, and de- lighted to find itself cleverer than it thought, acclaims the compromising intermediary as a genius. The process of disinfection thus begun goes on with increasing energy and rapidity, and before long the travesty of the new idea is completely assimilable by the social organism. The public, after swallowing innumerable imitations of the new idea, may even at last reluctantly accept the original creator as a great man, but generally not until he has been dead for some time and has become a vague and mythical figure.

It is literally true to say that the imitations of works of art are more assimilable by the public than originals, and therefore always tend to fetch a higher price in the market at the moment of their production.

The fact is that the average man uses art entirely for its symbolic value. Art is in fact the symbolic currency of the world. The possession of rare and much coveted works of art is regarded as a sign of national greatness. The growth and development of the Kaiser Friedrich museum was due to the active support of the late Emperor, a man whose distaste for genuine art is notorious, but whose sense of the symbolic was highly developed. Large and expensively ornamented buildings become symbols of municipal greatness. The amount of useless ornaments on facades of their offices is a valuable symbol of the financial exuberance of big commercial undertakings; and, finally, the social status of the individual is expressed to the admiring or envious outer world by the stream-lines of an aristocratic motor-car, or the superfluity of lace curtains in the front windows of a genteel suburban villa.

The social man, then, lives in a world of symbols, and though he presses other things into his service, such, for instance, as kings, footmen, dogs, women, he finds in art his richest reservoir of symbolic currency. But in a world of symbolists the creative artist and the creative man of science appear in strange isolation as the only people who are not symbolists. They alone are up against certain relations which do not stand for something else, but appear to have ultimate value, to be real.

Art as a symbolic currency is an important means of the instinctive life of man, but art as created by the artist is in violent revolt against the instinctive life, is an expression of the reflective and fully conscious life. It is natural enough, then, that before it can be used by the instinctive life it must be deprived by travesty of its too violent assertion of its own reality. Travesty is necessary at first to make it assimilable, but in the end long familiarity may rob even original works of art of their insistence, so that, finally, even the great masterpieces may become the most cherished symbols of the lords of the instinctive life, may, as in fact they frequently do, become the property of millionaires.

A great deal of misunderstanding and ill-feeling between the artist and the public comes from a failure to realise the necessity of this process of assimilation of the work of art to the needs of the instinctive life.

I suspect that a very similar process takes place with regard to truth. In order that truth may not outrage too violently the passions and egoisms of the instinctive life it, too, must undergo a process of deformation.

Society, for example, accepts as much of the ascertainable truth as it can stand at a given period in the form of the doctrine of its organised religion.

Now what effect would the development of the Great State which this book anticipates have upon all this? First, I suppose that the fact that every one had to work might produce a new reverence, especially in the governing body, for work, a new sense of disgust and horror at wasteful and purposeless work. Mr. Money has written of waste of work; here in unwanted pseudo-art is another colossal waste. Add to this ideal of economy in work the presumption that the workers in every craft would be more thoroughly organised and would have a more decisive voice in the nature and quality of their productions. Under the present system of commercialism the one object, and the complete justification, of producing any article is, that it can be made either by its intrinsic value, or by the fictitious value put upon it by advertisement, to sell with a sufficient profit to the manufacturer. In any socialistic state, I

imagine — and to a large extent the Great State will be socialistic at least — there would not be this same automatic justification for manufacture ; people would not be induced artificially to buy what they did not want, and in this way a more genuine scale of values would be developed. Moreover, the workman would be in a better position to say how things should be made. After years of a purely commercial standard, there is left even now, in the average workman, a certain bias in favour of sound and reasonable workmanship as opposed to the ingenious manufacture of fatuous and fraudulent objects; and, if we suppose the immediate pressure of sheer necessity to be removed, it is probable that the craftsman, acting through his guild organisations, would determine to some extent the methods of manufacture. Guilds might, indeed, regain something of the political influence that gave us the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It is quite probable that this guild influence would act as a check on some innovations in manufacture which, though bringing in a profit, are really disastrous to the community at large. Of such a nature are all the so-called improvements whereby decoration, the whole value of which consists in its expressive power, is multiplied indefinitely by machinery. When once the question of the desirability of any and every production came to be discussed, as it would be in the Great State, it would inevitably follow that some reasonable and scientific classifications would be undertaken with regard to machinery. That is to say, it would be considered in what processes and to what degree machinery ought to replace handiwork, both from the point of view of the community as a whole and from that of the producer. So far as I know, this has never been undertaken even with regard to mere economy, no one having calculated with precision how far the longer life of certain hand-made articles does not more than compensate for increased cost of production. And I suppose that in the Great State other things besides mere economy would come into the calculation. The Great State will live, not hoard.

It is probable that in many directions we should extend mechanical operations immensely, that such things as the actual construction of buildings, the mere laying and placing of the walls might become increasingly mechanical. Such methods, if confined to purely structural elements, are capable of beauty of a special kind, since they can express the ordered ideas of proportion, balance, and interval as conceived by the creative mind of the architect. But in process of time one might hope to see a sharp line of division between work of this kind and such purely expressive and non- utilitarian design as we call ornament; and it would be felt clearly that into this field no mechanical device should intrude, that, while ornament might be dispensed with, it could never be imitated, since its only reason for being is that it conveys the vital expressive power of a human mind acting constantly and directly upon matter.

Finally, I suppose that in the Great State we might hope to see such a considerable levelling of social conditions that the false values put upon art by its symbolising of social status would be largely destroyed and, the pressure of mere opinion being relieved, people would develop some more immediate reaction to the work of art than they can at present achieve.

Supposing, then, that under the Great State it was found impossible, at all events at first, to stimulate and organise the abstract creative power of the pure artist, the balance might after all be in favour of the new order if the whole practice of applied art could once more become rational and purposeful. In a world where the objects of daily use and ornament were made with practical common sense, the aesthetic sense would need far less to seek consolation and repose in works of pure art.

Nevertheless, in the long run mankind will not allow this function, which is necessary to its spiritual life, to lapse entirely. I imagine, however, that it would be much safer to penalise rather than to stimulate such activity and that simply in order to sift out those with a genuine passion from those who are merely attracted by the apparent ease of the pursuit. I imagine

that the artist would naturally turn to one of the applied arts as his means of livelihood; and we should get the artist coming out of the bottega as he did in fifteenth-century Florence. There are, moreover, innumerable crafts, even besides those that are definitely artistic, which, if pursued for short hours (Sir Leo Money has shown how short these hours might be), would leave a man free to pursue other callings in his leisure.

The majority of poets today are artists in this position. It is comparatively rare for anyone to make of poetry his actual means of livelihood. Our poets are, first of all, clerks, critics, civil servants, or postmen. I very much doubt if it would be a serious loss to the community if the pure graphic artist were in the same position. That is to say, that all our pictures would be made by amateurs. It is quite possible to suppose that this would be not a loss, but a great gain. The painter's means of livelihood would probably be some craft in which his artistic powers would be constantly occupied, though at a lower tension and in a humbler way. The Great State aims at human freedom; essentially, it is an organisation for leisure — out of which art grows; it is only a purely bureaucratic Socialism that would attempt to control the aesthetic lives of men.

So I conceive that those in whom the instinct for abstract creative art was strongest would find ample opportunities for its exercise, and that the temptation to simulate this particular activity would be easily resisted by those who had no powerful inner compulsion.

In the Great State, moreover, and in any sane Socialism, there would be opportunity for a large amount of purely private buying and selling. Mr Wells' *Modern Utopia*, for example, hypothecates a vast superstructure of private trading. A painter might sell his pictures to those who were engaged in more lucrative employment, though one supposes that with the much more equal distribution of wealth the sums available for this would be incomparably smaller than at present; a picture would not be a speculation, but a pleasure, and no one would become an artist in the hope of making a fortune.

Ultimately, of course, when art had been purified of its present unreality by a prolonged contact with the crafts, society would gain a new confidence in its collective artistic judgment, and might even boldly assume the responsibility which at present it knows it is unable to face. It might choose its poets and painters and philosophers and deep investigators, and make of such men and women a new kind of kings.

Roger Fry

*Reprinted with considerable alterations from “The Great State” (Harper, 1912). Here, it is reproduced based on Roger Fry (1920), “Art and Socialism”, *Vision and design*, London: Chatto & Windus. (Few changes have been made modernising the spelling like “to-day” becoming “today.”)

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04. Mailings from the Margins: Paulo Bruscky, Leonhard Frank Duch and Edgardo Antonio Vigo's Mail Art Practice, by Vanessa K. Davidson

Abstract

This paper seeks to demonstrate how three artists on the margins of their respective countries' artistic centers maintained an intimate dialogue through mail art. Paulo Bruscky and Leonhard Frank Duch of Recife, Brazil, and Edgardo Antonio Vigo of La Plata, Argentina, exchanged letters and artworks through the mail over the course of twenty years, beginning in the mid-1970s and ending only with Vigo's death in 1997. Although their styles, methods, and approaches to mail art differ greatly, their intentions converge in several key series of works that posit art as life. These series elucidate each artist's personal world view and, at the same time, they demonstrate the varied possibilities for making mail art into an exercise of freedom during an era of intense political turmoil under military dictatorships.

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Abstract

This paper seeks to demonstrate how three artists on the margins of their respective countries' artistic centers maintained an intimate dialogue through mail art. Paulo Bruscky and Leonhard Frank Duch of Recife, Brazil, and Edgardo Antonio Vigo of La Plata, Argentina, exchanged letters and artworks through the mail over the course of twenty years, beginning in the mid-1970s and ending only with Vigo's death in 1997. Although their styles, methods, and approaches to mail art differ greatly, their intentions converge in several key series of works that posit art as life. These series elucidate each artist's personal world view and, at the same time, they demonstrate the varied possibilities for making mail art into an exercise of freedom during an era of intense political turmoil under military dictatorships.

This paper [1] seeks to demonstrate how three artists on the margins of their respective countries' artistic centers maintained an intimate dialogue through mail art. Paulo Bruscky (1949-) and Leonhard Frank Duch (1940-) of Recife, Brazil, and Edgardo Antonio Vigo (1928-1997) of La Plata, Argentina, exchanged letters and artworks through the mail over the course of twenty years, beginning in the mid-1970s and ending only with Vigo's death in 1997.[2] Although their styles, methods, and approaches to mail art differ greatly, their intentions converge in several key series of works that posit art as life, primarily through a poetics of displacement. Vigo displaces the static art object with open calls to participatory action; Bruscky uses the literal traces of his own body to displace the hermetic artwork; and Duch dispels the myth of the artist-genius by representing his everyday activities as art. Ultimately, each artist's approach offers insight into the diverse modes of conceiving and creating mail art in Latin America.

Vigo, Bruscky and Duch's mail art friendship was as intimate as their production was disparate. Whereas Vigo's mailings were polished prints, Bruscky often relied on hospital equipment to render images of his body from inside out, and Duch preferred to use xeroxed images upon which he would print free-hand and rubber-stamped messages. Whereas Vigo wrote numerous theoretical texts on mail art, Bruscky was more concerned

with staging exhibitions and poetry festivals, and Duch participated as a free spirit, stamping his envelopes with slogans like “Duchpost,” and “I am Duch, not Duchamp!” Yet, in Vigo’s *Señalamientos* (Signaling series) and *Proyectos para realizar* (Projects to be Realized), in Bruscky’s hospital pieces and *Natureza Postal* (Postal Nature) series, and in Duch’s *I AM AN ARTIST* works, all three artists attempt to erase the boundaries between art and life. These series elucidate each artist’s personal world-view and, at the same time, they demonstrate the varied possibilities for making mail art into an exercise of freedom during an era of intense political turmoil under military dictatorships.

The dictatorships that ruled these nations during the period (in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, and in Brazil from 1964 to 1985) attacked insurgents and protestors with ruthless force, created clandestine detention centers to torture and execute political prisoners, instigated far-reaching campaigns of repression and censorship, and instilled society with a pervasive culture of fear.[3] Many dissenting artists, writers and intellectuals, among other civilians, feared for their lives and went into self-imposed exile. Those who remained often succumbed to self-censorship, ceased production entirely, or channeled their creativity through alternative networks of communication less vulnerable to censorship, such as mail art. Embracing the postal system as a ready-made device that could be manipulated for creative ends, Vigo, Bruscky, and Duch sent their experiments with art as life to sympathetic artists around the globe via the international mail art network that blossomed in the mid-1960s, discussed below.

Presenting art as life was nothing new in the 1970s: Duchamp’s ready-mades opened the door to a host of precedents, from John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg to Fluxus and the Nouveau Realistes to Argentine Alberto Greco, to name just a few.[4] But the notion of art as life was a novelty among South American mail artists, most of who used the mail as a vehicle for sharing poems, drawings, rubber-stamped pieces, and altered postcards. Vigo, Bruscky, and Duch used these media, too, but were more interested in diverse strategies that turned life into the subject of their art. In their projects, art literally took shape as life: whether proposed as action for willing participants, reflected in processes that revealed the inner workings of the body, or posited as representations of everyday events, art was but a frame for life itself.

What is mail art and how did these three South American artists conceptualize it? Few scholars of art history have broached this subject; the vast majority of texts about mail art have been penned by its practitioners. In the broadest sense, mail art is a form of communication between artists who exchange artworks via international postal networks without any expectation of remuneration. They relish the institutional stamps and markings that become integral, if accidental, parts of their pieces as they flow through the mail

network, and often ask recipients to modify sent works and post them to third parties, thereby instigating chains of international exchange. Mail artists thus circumvent the commercial gallery system as well as institutional infrastructures while interacting with like-minded artists around the world. As mail artist John P. Jacob asserts: “Mail art was not created for the real world, or the real world galleries. It was created by artists, for artists.”[5]

The modern mail art movement was launched by New York artist Ray Johnson, who sent collages he called “moticos” to artists, friends, and curators beginning in the mid-1950s. Johnson forged an ever-expanding network of correspondents that mail artist Ed Plunkett termed “The New York Correspondence School”—a spin on the New York School of Abstract Expressionism—in 1962. Although Johnson is universally considered to be the progenitor of modern mail art, Futurist and Dadaist artists employed the mails to circulate their works during the first quarter of the 20th century, and the Nouveau Realistes played with the postal system during the late 1950s, as did Fluxus artists during the 1960s and 1970s. Starting in 1966, Fluxus artist Ken Friedman published annual compilations of artist names and addresses under the title “The International Contact List of the Arts,” extending access to potential mail art correspondents to a broad audience. By the early 1970s, mail art had become a flourishing international phenomenon.[6]

In Latin America, Vigo was the most prolific writer on this subject, and his first musings on mail art appear in a 1975 article entitled “Arte-correo: una nueva forma de expresión” (Mail Art: A New Form of Expression). This text was first published in the magazine *Poetas Argentinos* and subsequently reprinted in Venezuelan mail artist Diego Barboza’s broadsheet *Buzón de Arte* (Art Mailbox) and widely circulated throughout Latin America and beyond. Written in collaboration with Argentine artist Horacio Zabala, the article states:

When a sculpture is sent by mail, the creator is limited to utilizing a fixed means of transport to move an already created work. When the sculpture was being created, this transfer was not taken into account. On the contrary, in the new art language we are analyzing, the fact that the work must travel a set distance is part of its structure, is the work itself. The work has been created to be sent through the mail [...] The postal system, then, does not exhaust its function in the transfer of the work but incorporates and conditions it. And the artist, in turn, changes the function of this medium of communication.[7]

In this text, the authors list numerous mail art shows from around the world, but the activities of Johnson’s New York Correspondence School in the early 1960s and Fluxus artists’ epistolary experiments during the early to mid part of the decade are glaring omissions in their overview of mail art. Moreover, their statement that “We cannot affirm that the first piece of ART BY CORRESPONDENCE took the form of the postcard, but it is indubitable that this [medium] has been the base of its subsequent development”[8] manifest these artists’ incomplete knowledge of international occurrences. For, although Vigo was the foremost pioneer of mail art in South America, he seems to have stumbled into its history almost by accident. As he expressed in a letter to Julia Tant of London on the 9th of August,

1995: “The same thing happened to me as to you. I created envelopes for my mailings of exchanged materials, postcards, and stamps and used rubber stamps without knowing that since 1950 the SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE founded by Ray Johnson—recently tragically disappeared—had begun to create the foundations for such practices.”[9]

In a subsequent manuscript entitled “Artecorreo: Una nueva etapa en el proceso revolucionario de la creación” (Mail Art: A New Phase in the Revolutionary Process of Creation) dated 1976, Vigo does allude to Fluxus as “the movement that for the first time made postal practice an element of creative communication,”[10] and he mentions Ray Johnson, Arman, Robert Filliou, and Chieko Shiomi as precursors as well. In addition, Vigo here affirms that the mail artist’s “commitment is quite clear, he must be the constant TRANSMITTER, RECEIVER, AND EMITTER of all of the investigations and experiments of the tendency.”[11] And in the same text, he calls for mail artists to be revolutionary in “CONTAINING WITHIN THEIR MESSAGES a dosage of inconformity that turns it into a CRITICAL-PRACTICAL TESTIMONY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITIES that surround us.”[12] This call to arms reflects the revolutionary spirit of the times in Argentina, although Vigo does not address politics in the vast majority of his mail art.

In a 1976 article entitled “Arte correo e a grande rede: Hoje a arte é este comunicado” (Mail Art and the Great Network: Today, Art is this Communiqué), Bruscky cites Vigo and Zabala’s 1975 text as a primary source on international mail art activities, though his approach to the subject is somewhat different. Bruscky asserts that mail art is “anti-bourgeoisie, anti-commercial, anti-system, etc.” and that it has “shortened distances between people and countries, affording with great ease exhibitions and interchanges, in which there are no judgments nor prizes for the works, as in the old salons and transitory biennials. In Mail Art, art has reclaimed its principle functions: information, protest, and denouncement.”[13] These final words reflect Bruscky’s stance that mail art should be primarily political in nature, though in fact most of his mail artworks have a playful rather than a political edge. Nevertheless, mail art served Vigo, Bruscky, and Duch as a means of escaping censorship under repressive military regimes and connecting with artists far from the confines of their marginal cities.

These three artists also shared the conviction that art should be kept out of official institutional frameworks and far beyond the commercial gallery circuit. As Vigo wrote to Bruscky in a letter dated November 7th, 1977: “We must collaborate amongst ourselves, it’s the way to create the HUMAN CIRCUIT that is indispensable for our own defense and in addition it gives us more and more strength. It is fundamental if we want to fight against certain structures that have left art in a total divorce from its own essence, [a situation in which] a CV, performance, [and] the valorization of his work in the market is more important for an artist than his actual activity and his commitment to the content of his work.”[14] Mail art was the ideal format for this escape from institutional confines, as Vigo expressed in another letter to Bruscky dated April 27th of the same year. Thanking Bruscky for his last letter which was “full of enthusiasm and principles that we fully share,” Vigo

states: “The marginal communication media are at this moment waging a great battle, and within this great tendency [...] mail art is fundamental, because I believe that it like nothing else incarnates and faces in the best way the possibility of other territories where, like it or not, the defenders of the System must surrender.”[15] This statement has a markedly political tone, but, as Vigo goes on to elucidate in his letter, the System he is fighting against is that which alienates art from viewers by placing it in an institutional context.

Vigo strove to overcome the gap between art and audience by making receivers of his mail art into co-creators of the works. For example, his *Obras (in)completas* ((In) Complete Works) of 1969, sent through the mail to artists and friends near and far away, consists of four printed labels meant to be affixed to any objects recipients deemed worthy of art status. The accompanying instructions specify that, “in line with the theory of participation art, a certain percentage of the creation is transferred to wherever you desire to place it”: a kind of do-it-yourself kit for creating ready-mades, this work transforms former spectators into collaborators in processes of Duchampian designation.

Vigo’s *Señalamientos* (Signalings), begun in 1968, take this process in a new direction. As stated in the manifesto that accompanied the first of these *Signalings*, the *Manojo de semáforos* (Cluster of Streetlights) of 1968, this series aimed “not to REPRESENT but rather to PRESENT” objects that were not “‘sheltered’ or ‘hidden’ in museums and galleries” but existent in the urban landscape for all to appreciate. The *Cluster of Streetlights* event, which took place on the 25th of October 1968 at 8:00 pm on the corner of 1st Avenue and 60th Street in La Plata, was publicized through mailings, radio broadcasts, and in the newspaper over the course of 20 days. (Fig. 1) Its goal was to produce a simple contemplation of the streetlights, a “gratuitous act of esthetic investigation”[16] in which the artist himself would not be present so as not to influence the act of appreciation of this everyday monument.



Fig. 1

Vigo's *Paseo visual a la Plaza Rubén Darío* (Visual Stroll through the Plaza Rubén Darío) was his fifth *Signaling* event, and it occurred within the context of the Buenos Aires' Center of Art and Communication or CAYC's *Sculpture, Foliage, and Noises* exhibition in November 1970. Sent by mail and handed out to passersby, the textual instructions for this piece proposed that participants mark with chalk a small area in a public park and make a 360 degree turn within it: "Register within yourself what you have seen, and make your conclusions: in the end, you will have realized a *Visual Stroll through the Plaza Rubén Darío*." Suggested variations—such as enacting the turn standing on tiptoe, crouching, or, impossibly, stretched out flat on the ground—were meant to engender different perspectives. In their celebration of everyday life as raw material for esthetic experience, as well as their cultivation of chance and indeterminacy as crucial components, Vigo's *Signalings* are akin to John Cage's landmark *4 Minutes and 33 Seconds* or "silent piece" of 1952 and to the Fluxus "event scores"[17] born of Cagean influence during the early 1960s.

Vigo's *Projects to be Realized* are the most demonstrative of his participatory esthetic. He began forging a theoretical framework for such pieces in his 1969 treatise "De la poesía/proceso a la poesía para y/o realizar" (From Process/Poetry to Poetry to be and/or Realized). He writes: "The possibility of art is no longer only in the participation of the observer, but rather in her constructive-ACTIVATION in an ART-TO-BE-REALIZED that

has burned down divisions between inherited genres and proceeds toward a goal of total integration.” In this new paradigm, artists no longer merely present audiences with interactive works. They become “programmers of projects” who spur participants to “move from the category of consumer to that of creator.” The projects themselves could take many forms, so long as they are “most modifiable, [allow] for changes, replacements, and additions, either of materials or of formal structures that foster play,” and engender “the truly active (and unconditional) participation of the spectator.”[18]

Vigo’s 1973 *Acciones interconectadas por secuencias* (Interconnected Actions by Means of Sequences) perfectly encapsulate this esthetic. The first proposes that participants turn around in a circle and memorize all that they have seen, a memory that can be erased by turning in the opposite direction. Though reminiscent of his *Visual Stroll through the Plaza Rubén Darío*, this proposal enables the participant to execute the proposed action whenever and wherever she wishes. The same can be said of the three remaining actions: the second, “Modification by Soaking,” calls for participants to catch the atmosphere in their hands and “soak” what they have captured; the third, “Come and Go,” invites recipients to cross the street and take a visual “inventory of things”; and the fourth involves hitch-hiking and assessing the time it takes to move from one place to another and back again. These ephemeral actions are intended to make participants aware of their surroundings by the simplest means, urging them to contemplate the urban fabric they traverse daily in a new light. Once again, life here comes to the fore as the subject of Vigo’s art, as participants become aware of everyday elements they take for granted.

While many of Bruscky’s performances and artworks also focused on urban space, a large part of his mail art was a window onto the inner workings of the body. His day job at the Hospital Agamenon Magalhães afforded him access to machines that enabled him literally to make art from and about life. For example, for his 1976 *O Meu Cerebro Desenha Assim* (My Brain Draws in this Way) Bruscky used the hospital’s electroencephalogram machine to trace his brain waves. Sent as a small booklet, and also developed as a film piece, each page of undulating lines turn the artist’s own brain activity into an abstract composition.

On the other hand, Bruscky’s *Autum Radium Retratum* series, begun in 1976, equated art with life by generating trace images of his body. Using the hospital’s x-ray machine on different parts of his own body, Bruscky sent the resulting x-ray prints to mail artists around the world. (Fig. 2) The envelopes in which these pieces were sent harbor clues to their content, as Bruscky made smaller stamps of such x-ray imagery to paste on the outside of his mailings. Unsettling, these images evoke human frailty, as x-rays are usually

used to detect broken bones and other illnesses, at the same time that they affirm the actual body as the stuff of art. X-ray images are also used to identify human remains through dental imagery, a potent allusion to the unidentified victims of the dictatorship.



Fig. 2

Bruscky also embraced experiences in nature as esthetic exercises and transformed them into mail art. His *Natureza Postal* (Postal Nature) series of 1978 encouraged recipients to use their olfactory and tactile senses when opening their mail. For instance, on the verso of one letter, Bruscky writes: “This envelope contains the smell of the beach at São José da Coroa Grande.” Inside, one finds a clump of seaweed fresh from the beach, a metonymic fragment standing in for the whole of the seaside experience. He collected numerous samples from other beaches and repeated the exercise. Upon the outsides of other such mailings, Bruscky instructs: “Open and smell: the first memory is art.”[19]

While Bruscky made the body and the natural world the subject of his mail art, Duch chose to present his everyday life as an all-encompassing artistic endeavor, thus displacing the mythic image of the artist-genius at work in his studio by one of the artist realizing everyday actions outside of it. *Arte é Vida* (Art is Life) was his motto, and it appears stamped on almost all of his correspondence.

Duch wrote frequently to Vigo about the importance of mail art in his life. For example, on the 8th of April, 1981, Duch writes: “For me, mail art has a function, an importance [...] that you cannot imagine. It changed my behavior; I’m not the same Leo as ten years ago. Mail art opened my head and my mouth and my heart. It opened my whole

being. It broke all my introspective and solitary silence.”[20] He goes on to differentiate mail art’s role among artists in the first world and in developing countries: “I think that in Europe and the United States the problem is a bit different. There, there is no vital necessity for communication as in our Latin America, marginal by its very nature. For me, mail art was the only way out for my creativity and for my life.”[21]

Duch also expresses his frustration at the conservative artistic scene in Recife. “Recife is very poor,” he writes Vigo on the 1st of February 1981, “and nothing happens here.”[22] Several years later he expresses the same sentiments even more forcefully. On the 6th of July, 1987, he writes to Vigo: “The political situation couldn’t be worse and the economy is a mess, there no longer exists the minimum possibility of having at the very least a dignified life. [...] To make art...here... what for? for whom?”[23] Mail art was Duch’s escape from this gloomy situation, and Vigo, a true ally, even though the two artists never met. “Men like you, Vigo,” he writes on the 14th of May, 1988, “are what keep my hopes up.”[24]

Nonetheless, Duch was forever frustrated by the lack of recognition he received as a mail artist. Hence his *I AM AN ARTIST* series, a body of work that defines art as life itself. Any daily activity was fair game. For example, in one work he presents himself in xeroxed photographs playing with his youngest child; in another, he is walking through the streets of Recife, stretched out on the grass for a nap, and drinking a bottle of beer; in another he is seen horsing around with a cement mixer; and in yet another he is seen drinking alone at a bar—all images are stamped in red with the slogan “I AM AN ARTIST.” (Fig. 3) As Duch wrote for an exhibition of his work included in the *Six Mail Artists* show held at the Stempelplaats in Amsterdam in 1980: “All my mail-art work in the last years has been based on the cultural reality I LIVE. By ‘I AM AN ARTIST’ I mean a state of anguish. Agony. It’s dangerous to be an artist in my country. But I am an artist. And I have to say it aloud, by shouting. I AM AN ARTIST.”[25] Duch’s statement conveys the dangers of acting as a dissenting artist under a military dictatorship notorious for vicious persecution of dissidents, but mail art was also his way of escaping isolation and engaging a new audience.

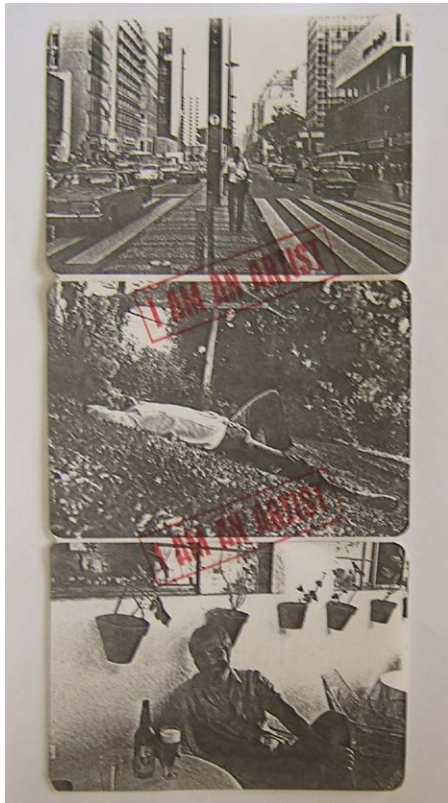


Fig. 3

Other images in the series feature Duch giving a faux interview on a television screen, stamped with the words “Yes... I AM AN ARTIST... unemployed.” Another image depicts him sitting in a lawn chair reading the paper, with the penned captions “Humm...here is an announcement... for a bureaucratic job...I AM AN ARTIST,” all beneath the stamped header “Unemployed.” This contradiction between his insistent claim to be an artist and the word “unemployed” suggests that it was not enough to be a mail artist to be considered a productive member of society. Indeed, Vigo had a day job in the Ministry of Justice in La Plata, Bruscky worked at the Hospital Agamenon Magalhães, and Duch eventually found work as a factory manager, but mail art (and for Bruscky, many other projects) took up most of their free time.

Doubly marginalized, as South American artists working outside traditional artistic centers like Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Vigo, Bruscky, and Duch used mail art as a lifeline to the world beyond the margins. Whether proposing activities that participants could execute in real time and space, sending images of real life processes and body parts, or mailing xeroxed photographs of everyday activities, these three artists worked where life and art intersect. Though Vigo never met Bruscky or Duch in person, the relationships they developed were intimate and long-lasting. As Vigo signed off in a letter to Bruscky dated May 15th, 1978, “fraternal greetings to Duch, his daughter, and to Unhandeijara [Lisboa], drink a beer together and place an empty glass on the table, you can

be certain that I will be inside of it accompanying you.”[26]

Vanessa K. Davidson

Ph.D. Candidate

The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

[1] This paper was written on the occasion of the “Transnational Art from Latin America from 1950 to the Present Day” conference at The University of Texas at Austin in November 2009, where it was presented in condensed form with the title, “From Margin to Margin and Back Again: Paulo Bruscky, Leonhard Frank Duch, and Edgardo Antonio Vigo’s Mail Art Practice.”

[2] The letters cited in this paper were written between 1977 and 1995. All are as yet unpublished.

[3] For more information on Argentina and Brazil’s military dictatorships in English, see Antonius C. G. Robben, *Political Violence and Trauma in Argentina* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), and Maria Helena Moreira Alves, *State and Opposition in Military Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

[4] Profoundly influenced by Duchamp, in 1952 Cage created his *4 Minutes and 33 Seconds* or “silent piece,” which involved a performer seated at a piano for this duration: the performer opens and closes the piano keyboard to signal the beginning and end of the event, but the noise of the environment and sounds made by the audience constitute the content of the piece. Between 1954 and 1962, Robert Rauschenberg created his *Combines*, fusions of painting and sculpture that incorporated used clothing, found objects, urban detritus, and even taxidermied animals into heterogeneous artworks. Following Cage’s example, Fluxus artists held “Fluxconcerts” in which they presented everyday objects and activities as art. Nouveau Realistes Daniel Spoerri and Arman created works using found objects and trash (and, in Spoerri’s case, the remnants of dinner parties) in Paris during the 1960s. Also during the 1960s, Alberto Greco initiated his *Vivo-Dito* series, spontaneously signing people, encircling them with chalk, or requesting that they hold signs reading “This is a Work of Art by Alberto Greco” in photographs, thereby turning them into “living works of art.” For more information on these and other instances of art as life, see David Hopkins, *After Modern Art: 1945-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[5] John P. Jacob, “Mail Art: Aesthetic Revolution or Personal Evolution?” in Chuck Welch, ed., *Eternal Network: A Mail Art Anthology* (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 1995), p. 191. Ultimately, as Jean-Marc Poinot maintains, mail artists are “concerned with the mechanics of communications in general, with esthetic communication in particular, and especially with the esthetics of communication.” Poinot: “Utilizations of Postal Institutions and Long-Distance Communications,” in Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, eds., *Correspondence Art: Source Book for the Network of International Postal Art Activity* (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts Press, 1984), p. 58.

[6] For further information on mail art, see Michael Crane and Mary Stofflet, op. cit.

[7] Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Horacio Zabala, “Arte-correo, una nueva forma de expresión,” in Diego Barboza, *Buzón de Arte*, Year 1, N. 1, 1976, not paginated.

- [8] Ibid. All emphasis in citations quoted throughout this paper appears in the original.
- [9] Letter from Vigo to Julia Tant of London, August 9th, 1995. In Edgardo Antonio Vigo's private archive, La Plata, Argentina. Hereafter: Vigo Archive.
- [10] Edgardo Antonio Vigo, "Artecorreo: Una nueva etapa en el proceso revolucionario de la creación," 1976. Self-published. Vigo Archive. Part of this document was published in Diego Barboza's *Buzón de Arte*, Year 1, N. 2, 1976, with the same title.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Paulo Bruscky, "Arte correio e a grande rede: Hoje a arte é este comunicado," in Gloria Ferreira, et al, *Escritos de Artistas, Anos 1960-1970* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2006), p. 375.
- [14] Letter from Vigo to Bruscky dated November 7th, 1977. In Paulo Bruscky's private archive, Recife, Brazil. Hereafter: Bruscky Archive.
- [15] Letter from Vigo to Bruscky dated April 27th, 1977. Bruscky Archive.
- [16] Vigo, Manifesto for *Manojo de semáforos*, 1968. Vigo Archive.
- [17] Pioneered by Fluxus artist George Brecht, "event scores" were performative "one-liners" that spoofed conventional concert behavior, confounding the audience's expectations by presenting non-musical or behind-the-scenes actions as the main attraction. Works such as *Violin Solo (Polish)*, *Flute Solo (Disassembling; Assembling)*, *String Quartet (Shaking Hands)*, and *Concert for Orchestra (Exchanging)*, all of 1962, were performed in Fluxus Concerts and Festivals in Europe and the United States during the early to mid-1960s. All pieces could be performed by anyone regardless of authorship—Fluxartists and audience members alike. Brecht's assertion that "In principle, everybody could use the event scores as paradigms and invent their own whenever they wanted to" eradicates distinctions between artist and audience and leaves receivers' creativity unbounded, aspirations at the heart of Vigo's practice. "An Interview with George Brecht by Irmeline Leeber," in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, (Milan: Multhipla, 1978), p. 119.
- [18] Vigo, "De la poesía/proceso a la poesía para y/o a realizar," 1969. Self published. Vigo Archive.
- [19] Cited by Cristina Freire, *Paulo Bruscky: Arte, Arquivo, e Utopia* (Recife: Companhia Editorial de Pernambuco, 2006), p. 153.
- [20] Letter from Duch to Vigo dated April 8th, 1981. Vigo Archive.
- [21] Ibid.
- [22] Letter from Duch to Vigo dated February 1st, 1981. Vigo Archive.
- [23] Letter from Duch to Vigo dated July 6th, 1987. Vigo Archive.
- [24] Letter from Duch to Vigo dated May 14th, 1988. Vigo Archive.
- [25] Exhibition catalogue, *Six Mail Artists* (Amsterdam: Stempelplaats, 1980), not paginated.

[26] Letter from Vigo to Bruscky dated May 15th, 1978. Bruscky Archive.

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Updated on Apr 22, 2012 by [ArtHS Editor](#) (Version 7)

Abstract

When it comes to the study of pre-Raphaelite artwork collections, the name of the American Samuel Bancroft Junior (1840-1915), who ran a textile industry, is very well-known; his pre-Raphaelite collection – gathered between 1892 and 1915 – is the largest outside of the United Kingdom. This article – based on parts of my master thesis – tries to explain how by the sole passion of this industrial for these British artists, Bancroft managed, at the end of the century, to spread a brand new enthusiasm for Rossetti's and Burne Jone's art among his peers and be an active part of a cultural transfert between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

When it comes to the study of pre-Raphaelite art collections, the name of the American Samuel Bancroft Junior (1840-1915), who ran a textile industry, is very well-known. His pre-Raphaelite collection – gathered between 1892 and 1915 – is the largest outside of the United Kingdom, a fact Bancroft couldn't have predicted himself when he first bought his very first artwork in 1885 - an autotype of the main female figure of *La Bella Mano (The Beautiful Hand)* - and his first oil painting in 1890, *Water Willow*, both by Rossetti. [i] While his contemporaries were more interested in buying Trecento and Quattrocento artworks or contemporary French paintings, Bancroft fell for the pre-Raphaelites whose works he first saw during a trip to Manchester in 1880: "I shall never forget my shock of delight at seeing hanging behind my host at his tea table the first Rossetti picture I had ever looked at. [...] I lost consciousness of my surroundings." [ii] What is less known about Bancroft's collection though, is that Bancroft gave access to the American public to his collection – and thus helped spread the pre-Raphaelite fame in the United States – by letting his diligently collected artworks be exhibited in Philadelphia at the Museum of Fine Arts in 1892 and at the Century Club in New York in 1893. Then the question is, how the exhibition of those British artworks was received by the American audience when pre-Raphaelite paintings were only known through their engraved and photographed reproductions?

The gathering of the collection.

Bancroft was not the only pre-Raphaelite collector in America. There were the well-known C.E. Norton - Harvard's first teacher of art history - who was fond of Rossetti's watercolours, Charles L. Hutchinson - president of the Chicago Art Institute - who owned one of Rossetti's version of *Beata Beatrix*, Mrs Edward D. Brandegee of Boston who owned Rossetti's major work *Bocca Bacciata*, Roger Fry - president of the Metropolitan Museum of New York - who bought the watercolour of *Lady Lilith* in 1908, and Robert Alexander Waller who acquired Burne-Jones' *Cupid's Hunting Fields*. Yet, if Bancroft was the only one in the U.S.A, he was still the most dedicated collector pre-Raphaelite art collector and soon his name became the one to be relied upon for anything related to those British artists.

Bancroft didn't restrain himself to the simple act of collecting works of art. He tried to become acquainted with the last members of the pre-Raphaelite circle : going through their families, their mistresses, their patrons or their friends, Bancroft started multiple correspondences with whoever he could find to gather information on his favourite artists, namely Rossetti and Burne-Jones. [iii] This acquired knowledge gave Bancroft the position of true *connoisseur* of the brotherhood. Art clubs like the *Nameless Club* were delighted to welcome him "and his *Rossettiana*" to their private reunions and many gentlemen asked him reproductions of works from his collection. [iv] While parts of his collection were exhibited in Wilmington - his own home-town - in 1899, a series of conferences on the pre-Raphaelites were held by professor Weygand, leading to the publication of an article in the 14th of March 1899 issue of the newspaper *Every Evening*. Bancroft, relying on his supposedly strong knowledge of the group, became their spokesperson and forced the newspaper to publish an erratum two days later to correct the "miscellaneous misinformations [...] – whether it is from the lecturer, [the] reporter, or [the] proof-reader or all three", defending both their paintings (Weygand arguing that the artists didn't know a thing about nature) and the painters' very own personalities. [v] At a time when artists - like Whistler or Wilde - manipulated the media to stage themselves as eccentrics or to convey an idealized image of themselves, in this very case it was Bancroft, their collector, who tried to defend his own idealized representation of what his favourite artists truly were. [vi]

When Bancroft's exhibition opened in 1892, the journalists were already starting to focus more on anecdotes and biographical content than on artwork descriptions in their articles. Bancroft became very well acquainted through letters with Fanny Cornforth, one of

Rossetti's mistresses, from whom Bancroft bought many paintings and her personal correspondence with the artist. The American journalists who were taking their information directly from Bancroft never failed to mention the collector's favourite mistress. The *Delaware Gazette and State Journal* started the trend which was going to persist for a while of identifying which one of Rossetti's mistress modelled for which painting, and reported what Bancroft believed to be true about Fanny without checking the veracity of their facts : "Among the miscellany of this valuable collection is found a photograph of Fanny Schott, Rossetti's model, who sat for "Lady Lilith", as well as for many others of his finest works. Indeed she was the original of all this golden haired blondes, and the first picture he ever used her as a model is one of his watercolors in this exhibition, in which she appears as Beatrice meeting Dante." [vii] Fanny indeed modelled for *Lady Lilith* but only the watercolour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York has kept Fanny's features ; Rossetti had been obliged by the previous collector, Frederick Leyland, to turn her features into the ones of Alexa Wilding in the oil version Bancroft had bought. However, Fanny never modelled for *Beatrice meeting Dante*, painted in 1851-55. Rossetti had not met Fanny yet at the time and it was quite obviously based on Elizabeth Siddall. In the end, Bancroft's enthusiasm for the pre-Raphaelites did not shelter him from passing on wrong facts about the group of painters, and those about Fanny were one of many.

In the last decade of the century though, Bancroft also helped American biographers like Marillier to write their books on Rossetti and guided them through their research. [viii] Elizabeth Cary was the very first to associate in a biography the name of Rossetti to the one of Bancroft by thanking him in her preface: "To Mr Bancroft I am [...] indebted for the invaluable privilege of studying characteristic examples of Rossetti's work precisely as he would have wished them to be studied ; in the home, that is, of their owner, and among surroundings suited to them." [ix] Bancroft also let her reproduce in her book for the first time some of the artworks he owned, enabling her to give a better overview of Rossetti's work.

The exhibition of the Bancroft collection in Philadelphia

In December 1892, a new aisle was constructed in Bancroft's home to house the artworks he had bought at the Leyland sale. Harrison S. Morris, director of the Pennsylvania Academy of The Fine Arts of Philadelphia, took the opportunity to temporarily welcome Bancroft's collection in the museum. 107 pre-Raphaelite artefacts were then lent – from paintings to drawings to photographs – accompanied by seven works from Norton's collection, and Hutchinson's *Beata Beatrix*. [x] If the exhibition was first organized because

it was more convenient for Bancroft to keep his artworks safe, Bancroft showed he was already willing to share his collection with the public : he invited the intellectuals and the businessmen of the area to visit his mansion and he lent some of his artworks to Clubs. [xi] Some of his Burne-Jones and Madox Brown had been previously exhibited at the *Art Club Gallery* of Philadelphia for two weeks in October 1892 since “some of the men there are very fond of Rosetti [sic].” [xii] Over the years, Bancroft became enough acquainted with Morris to send him directly the works he acquired in order to have them exhibited at the fine arts museum first. [xiii] For the 1892 exhibition, Bancroft decided to examine all the artworks himself to give indications on how to hang them on the walls and on what to write about them in the catalogue. [xiv]

The exhibition, which “has been looked forward to with unusual interest among literary and art circles, especially in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago,” [xv] was divided into two rooms. The first one was dedicated to photographs, drawings by William Blake, and the drawing of *Ruth Herbert* by Rossetti. The second room which “attract[ed] more immediate and also general attention in its examples of rich color and graceful delineation” housed the paintings of the collection, the princesses and angels painted by Burne-Jones hung on the right wall facing Rossetti’s prostitutes and *femmes fatales* displayed on the left one. [xvi]

The number of photographic reproductions was astonishing at that time : “[The reproductions] are so numerous as to be almost bewildering.” [xvii] Amongst the 107 works sent by Bancroft, 76 were photographs, a visual base that one must not neglect when it comes to the study of how pre-Raphaelite art spread at the end of the century. Indeed, Bancroft tried his best to get the complete work of Rossetti and of Burne-Jones on photographs and bought many reproductions from Hollyer, a famous photographer and fine art publisher.

Numerous works by William Blake were also exhibited in the first room. They were lent by the son of Blake’s biographer, Gilchrist. Blake was so deeply associated with the pre-Raphaelites during and after the exhibition that the press started to call him the “pre-pre-Raphaelite” and to firmly state that “the visionary Blake was the theoretical founder of the brotherhood.” [xviii]

The Century Club

The exhibition was such a success that it was moved to New York from the 2nd to the 9th of January 1893, to the *Century Club*, a gentlemen-only club that organized monthly private

exhibitions closed to the press. Stedman, the head of the organizing committee, asked to have them exhibited at his club because of his own interest for the British artists and because it was a one-off opportunity to show the complete collection in the city. [xix] The private inauguration was advertised and invitation cards were given to the cream of the crop of art amateurs. [xx] Bancroft wrote to Murray, one of the last member of the pre-Raphaelite circle still alive, that on the last day of the exhibition there were 1000 people attending the show which, for a private club, was a very high activity number for an eight-day exhibition. [xxi] J.W. Bouton, one of New York most influential publisher, wrote to Bancroft in January 1893: "I went to see your exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite pictures at the Century Club, and was delighted. I think the art lives of New York are indebted to you for a same treat." [xxii] To the works shown in Philadelphia were added *Christ's head for the study of Magdalen at the House of Simon* by Rossetti and a watercolour called *the Gate of Memory* both owned by the Reverend Moncure Conway. [xxiii]

Since it was a private exhibition, the press couldn't access the show as easily as in Philadelphia and thus, less articles were written on the subject. Stedman sent Bancroft every paper-clips he could find though; one of them arguing that the opportunity to see the Bancroft collection was a rare privilege since the Pre-Raphaelite works – except for the poems – had only been known through reproductions until then and that the world of art was highly indebted to Bancroft for this exhibition. [xxiv]

Other art clubs became interested in showing one or more works from Bancroft's collection. Miss Rose Clark from the *Buffalo Society of Artists* asked Bancroft the permission to show one of them at her art club. Despite Bancroft's refusal to let a work out for only "one night"[xxv], she managed to get from him Rossetti's drawing of *Ruth Herbert*, and put it as the first item on the catalogue with a short notice stating its provenance, probably written by Bancroft himself[xxvi]. He also let part of his collection be on exhibition at the *Century Club* of Wilmington, his home-town, from the 3rd of May to the 5th of 1899, and once more to Philadelphia's brand new *Watercolor Society* from the 30th of November to the 15th of December 1901. [xxvii]

The public's reaction to the pre-Raphaelite artworks

Before the exhibition of Bancroft's collection, the works of the pre-Raphaelites had only been shown in 1857-58 during a travelling exposition going through New York, Philadelphia and Boston. [xxviii] It was only a half-success considering that the goals of the Brotherhood were not fully understood by their American public who solely focused on how

the pre-Raphaelites depicted nature. As a matter of fact, the pre-Raphaelite landscapes that were exhibited were highly praised and even compared to the American Hudson River School. Later on, an American group of pre-Raphaelites was formed, guided by Ruskin's writings, whose main purpose was to study nature through landscape and still-life, giving up on the study of the human figure and the narration system that was so important to their British counterpart.

The famous Charles Eliot Norton, the first art history professor at Harvard University, started his very own collection of Rossetti's watercolours, and tried to show some of them at the *Seventh edition of the Artists' Fund Society* at the National Academy of Design of New York in November 1866. [xxix] Although *The Nation* stated that Rossetti was "the chief of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in respect of actual original power" and that "he [was] still the greatest painter of the English School [...] and a colorist unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled, among his contemporaries of all lands," [xxx] the main opinion was still against his "wretched virgins, scrawny, sharp featured, with high cheek bones, handling scratchy and disagreeable to the eye" and "compositions that can be tolerated only in medieval work." [xxxi]

Thus, it appears that those two exhibitions were altogether forgotten by the American public. Bancroft's collection was considered to be not only outstanding but to be "the first exhibition of pre-Raphaelite pictures ever held in this country." [xxxii] At the turn of the century, in America Preraphaelitism was no longer associated with the works of Millais, Hunt, Brown or Hughes but with Bancroft's collection. Thus, Rossetti and Burne-Jones became the only synonyms in the press of pre-Raphaelite art. Even though Millais and Hunt were known in America through engravings and prints, the press was already more akin to associate the term Preraphaelitism to the second generation of British artists led by Rossetti than strictly to the members of the original Brotherhood: "These four names – Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris, Burne-Jones - represent the latter and more important phase of pre-Raphaelitism." [xxxiii] Hunt who had been the American public's favourite in 1857-58 thanks to his famous painting *The Light of the World*, even received this scathing remark : "Hunt is not regarded as an important member of the P.R.B." [xxxiv]

The public attendance was high ; attracted and seduced by Rossetti's paintings, the public turned the exhibition into an "unexpected success" : "While it was presumed that curiosity would attract many, it was hardly expected that the people of this city were interested enough in the artistic and literary features of this branch of art to show a really deep interest in it." [xxxv] Bancroft informed C.F. Murray of the good news : "the show was very much more successful than we had dared to hope." [xxxvi] Even if pre-Raphaelite art

was here and there known thanks to reproductions in magazines and American print-sellers, [xxxvii] the success was even more unexpected given that a few days before, the same newspaper was highly sceptical about the public's interest for such an exhibition. [xxxviii] The enthusiasm for Rossetti's work was even more spectacular knowing that "to Americans he [Rossetti] is almost unknown." [xxxix] Thanks to the photographs filling the blank of Bancroft's collection, the press was thrilled by the exhibition : "Mr Samuel Bancroft Jr., of Wilmington, has done Americans the high service of bringing to this country the most characteristic examples of his work united in any one collection [...] this exhibition, as far as Rossetti is concerned, less an array of the work of an artist than a record of his life".[xl] The intellectuals from New York especially made the trip to Philadelphia to see the exhibition: "If it were permissible to measure the success in Philadelphia of the pre-Raphaelite exhibition by the increase in the attendance at the Academy, the verdict could be very readily determined. An unusual collection it has aroused unusual attention, not only within the local limits but which is noticeable in the interest which art lovers of New York and down East have shown in the event. Whether or not the pictures have won more of popular disapproval or commendation, whether they are ghostly or queer, symphonic or beautiful, they have succeeded in gaining a place in the thoughtful interest of the public."[xli]

Bancroft became the spearhead in the diffusion of Preraphaelitism in the United-States in the last decade of the 19th century by lending his collection multiple times and feeding the audience enthusiasm for Rossetti's art. It became clear that the American press could not dissociate Pre-Raphaelite art from Rossetti's art even if both of them were not strictly synonymous. From 1892 - after Bancroft's first exhibition - and onwards, the newspapers focused solely on Rossetti, nicknamed him the "genius" of art and the most talented of the colourists, and strongly affirmed that even though Rossetti "disclaimed the leadership of the school, saying that he could hardly recognize himself belonging to it, he is really the one man with whom Pre-Raphaelitism in England has been, is and always will be chiefly associated in our minds".[xlii]

Magali Martin

This article is based on the following master thesis :

Magali Martin, *La réception par la critique et les collectionneurs de l'art préraphaélite aux États-Unis au XIXe siècle (The reception by the critics and collectors of pre-Raphaelite art in the United States in the Nineteenth Century)*, Master II, under the wardenship of Ségolène Le Men, Paris Ouest, 2009, 461pp.

[i] For an overview of Bancroft's collection see Stephen Wildman, ed., *Waking Dreams : The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites from the Delaware Art Museum*, Alexandria, Va.:Art Services International, 2004.

[ii] Samuel Bancroft Jr, *Conference at the Booksellers'League*, New York City, 1901, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives.

[iii] Bancroft used to write among others to Charles Fairfax murray, one of Rossetti's assistant and dear friend who was close to the pre-Raphaelites, who both gave him informations on the artists and helped in chosing which of their works was worth buying. (cf. Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916).

[iv] Letter from Frank Miles Day&co to Samuel Bancroft Jr, 3rd of November 1892, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 4 Samuel Bancroft Jr. Correspondence and transactions, 1871-1893, "The gentlemen having in change the next dinner of the Nameless Club, have asked me to invite you to come to the dinner which will be given at the Art Club next wednesday evening at 7, and to bring with you such Rossetiana (sic) as you think will be interesting."

[v] Anonym, in *Every Evening*, 16th of March 1899, p.2.

[vi] cf. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist : Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 1996 and Sarah Burns, « Old Maverick to Old Master : Whistler in the public eye in the Turn-of-Century America », in *American Art Journal*, vol.22, n°1, spring 1990, pp.29-49.

[vii] "Burne-Jones, Rossetti", in *Delaware Gazette and State Journal*, 15 décembre 1892, p.2.

[viii] Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 11th of September 1899, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916, "a man named Marillier is doing a new picture book on Rossetti. I have been much laid under contribution and reviewed his labours, as he put it, "with a pick-axe" but he has just been holiday taking and recovered from my numerous attacks on his proof sheets".

[ix] Elisabeth Luther Cary, *The Rossettis*, New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1900.

[x] Norton had sent two watercoulours by Rossetti, *Beatrice Meeting Dante at a Marriage-Feast*, *Denies Him Her Salutation* and *The Chapel Before the Lists*, two photographs of *Hesterna Rosa* and *How They Met Themselves*, Two watercolours by Burne-Jones *Angels* and *Sibyl*, and one pen and ink drawing, *Romaunt of the Rose*. Hutchinson sent one of Rossetti's version of *Beata Beatrix*, the only one with a predella narrating the story of Dante and Beatrice. Bancroft wanted to obtain the loan of Burne-Jones' *Love Song* bought by a Bostonian collector but the request was denied. Cf. Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 25th of November 1892, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916.

[xi] For example Stedman, cf. Letter from A.Stedman to S.Bancroft Jr, 5th of June 1894, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 5 Samuel Bancroft Jr. Correspondence and transactions, 1894-1899.

[xii] cf. Letter from S. Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 25th of November 1892, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft, Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916.

[xiii] For example, he bought Ford Maddox Brown's *Romeo and Juliet* at the 1893 Chicago World's Exposition.

[xiv] Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to H.S.Morris, 21st of November 1892, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 38 Loans and Requests of Bancroft collection 1892-1940, "I now had your duplicate Express Receipt (Adams) for the box containing the "Water Willow", the autotype of "Washing Hands", the Water Color drawing of "Miss Herbert", the photograph of Fanny Schott, the Fred. Shields drawing of the dead Rossetti, and (I believe) five photos by Hollyer of other Rossetti pictures, - which I hope safe to hand by the time you get this.", "I should like to go over the list of Rossetti's work given by William Morris, Sharpe and Joe Knight with you with my photographs before us, so you may know what they are, and how to put them: cataloging them, or marking them."

[xv] "Burne-Jones, Rossetti", in *Delaware Gazette and State Journal*, 15 décembre 1892, p.2.

[xvi] Ibid.

[xvii] "The Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition", in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11th of December 1892, p.4.

[xviii] "The Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition", in *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 4th of December 1892, p.4, and "Pre-Raphaelites", in *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 8th of December 1892, p.2, "Blake may be said to have sounded the first trumpet announcing the advent of the movement."

[xix] Letter from A.Stedman to S.Bancroft Jr, 11th of December 1892, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 38 Loans and requests for loans of Bancroft Collection, 1892-1940. Correspondence, etc., "Perhaps Harrison Morris told you that I [...] proposed that it [the exhibition] be shown at their place before being dispersed. Such an event would be quite a feather to my cap here, and the collection really ought not to be scattered without being seen in New York. How is it? Will you let us have it? (...) My chief objectif is to let my literary and artistic friends see the works of the remarkable school of artist-litterateurs."

[xx] "Pre-Raphaelites at the Century Club", in *Springfield Republic*, 13th of January 1893, p.1, "now shown by invitation cards in the ample galleries of the Century Club in New York."

[xxi] Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 12th of January 1893, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916, "The last day they were 'on' in N.Y [...] the attendance was about 1000, while none of the other days showed more than half that."

[xxii] Letter from J.W. Bouton [Bookseller and Publisher] to Samuel Bancroft Jr, January (?) 1893, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 38 Loans and requests of

Bancroft collection 1892-1940.

[xxiii] Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 12th of January 1893, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916.

[xxiv] "Pre-Raphaelite Art", in *Daily Tribune*, 1st of January 1893, p.22, "it is a rare privilege, for Pre-Raphaelitism is illustrated in America more in libraries than in galleries (Mr Samuel Bancroft, Jr., who lends most of the paintings upon this occasion, is the only collector in the country who has as many as four important oils by Rossetti) the poems of the chief of the cult are known where his paintings are only familiar through reproductions."

[xxv] Letter from Miss Rose Clark to Samuel Bancroft Jr, 14th of January 1895, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 38 Loans and requests of Bancroft collection 1892-1940, "Some two years since I have the very great pleasure of seeing your collection of pictures and reproductions by Rossetti, Burne-Jones and William Blake – which you kindly loaned in New York, it as occurred to me that possibly you would and be willing to loan a few of them for a simple nights (sic) exhibition for the enjoyment and the education of our art club.", and Letter from Samuel Bancroft Jr to Miss Rose Clark, 19th of January 1895.

[xxvi] *Sketch in Gold and Umber of Miss Ruth Herbert by Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Catalogue of the *Buffalo Society of Artists* of 1896, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 39, Loans and requests for loans of Bancroft Collection, 1892-1982. Exhibition catalogues.

[xxvii] At the Wilmington exhibition, Bancroft loaned : the *Bella Mano* autotype, *Lady Lilith*, *The Water Willow* and *Magdalen* by Rossetti, *The Dream of Sardanapalus*, *The Corsair* and *Mercy* by Brown, *The Parting of Helga and Gunnlaug* by Murray, *May Margaret* and *Magdalen* by Sandys, *Hymenaeus* and *Study of a Girl* by Burne-Jones, and *Love Sonnets* by Marie Spartali Stillman. (Cf. loan list of artworks to be insured for the Wilmington exhibition, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, box 38 Loans and requests of Bancroft collection 1892-1940).

At the Philadelphia exhibition were loaned : *Study of a Girl's Figure* (n°132) by Burne-Jones, *The Corsair* and *Mercy* (n°134 et 135) by Brown, *Love's Messenger* (n°141) by Spartali Stillman, *The Parting of Helga and Gunnlaug* (n°142) by Murray, the sketch portrait of Fred.R.Leyland (n°144) by Rossetti and *The Annunciation* (n°145) by Siddall. Bancroft who was acquainted with the children of the pre-Raphaelites like May Morris or Philip Burne-Jones bought their artworks when he could; he then also loaned *Beside a Summer Sea* (n°133) by Philip Burne-Jones.

[xxviii] On the subject see Susan Casteras, *English Preraphaelitism and Its Reception in America in the XIXth Century*, Toronto, Rutherford, 1990. I also studied the subject in my master thesis, cf. Magali Martin, *La réception par la critique et les collectionneurs de l'art préraphaélite aux États-Unis au XIXe siècle (The reception by the critics and collectors of pre-Raphaelite art in the United States in the Nineteenth Century)*, Master II, under the wardenship of Ségolène Le Men, Paris Ouest, 2009, 461pp.

[xxix] Norton loaned *Before the Battle* (n°227) and *Dante meeting Beatrice* (n°251).

[xxx] Anonym, « Fine Arts. Two Drawings by Rossetti », in *The Nation*, vol.3, 2nd of December 1866, p.501.

- [xxxi] Stillman S. Conant, « The exhibition of Watercolors », in *Galaxy*, vol.3, 1867, p.57-58.
- [xxxii] “The Pre-Raphaelites Exhibition”, in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 décembre 1892, p.4.
- [xxxiii] Anonym, “Dante Gabriel Rossetti”, in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, octobre 1882, p.691-701
- [xxxiv] “Pre-Raphaelites at the Century Club”, in *Springfield Republic*, 13 janvier 1893, p.1.
- [xxxv] “The Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition”, in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 décembre 1892, p.4.
- [xxxvi] Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 12th of January 1893, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916.
- [xxxvii] “Burne-Jones, Rossetti”, in *Delaware Gazette and State Journal*, 15th of December 1892, p.2, ‘We are all, of course, more or less acquainted with the style of drawing as emphasized by the English Pre-Raphaelite school, shown from time to time in current magazine reprints”, and Letter from S.Bancroft Jr to C.F.Murray, 1st of November 1898, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Archives, Box 13 Samuel Bancroft Jr., Joseph Bancroft. Correspondence with Charles Fairfax Murray, 1892-1916, “I enclose you a letter to me from a print dealer in Boston, who has done more than any one I know to spread the knowledge of the Pre-Raphaelite work in this country. (...) He, Mr Jas. M. Hart – used to be with Herman[n] Wunderlich, in N.Y., and has been in Boston for some time.”
- [xxxviii] “The Pre-Raphaelites Exhibition”, in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4th of December 1892, p.4.
- [xxxix] “Pre-Raphaelites on View”, in *Philadelphia Press*, 12th of December 1892, vol.35, p.4.
- [xl] “Wagner and Rossetti”, in *The Philadelphia Times*, 18th of December 1892, p.19.
- [xli] Ibid.
- [xlii] “Pre-Raphaelite Art”, in *Daily Tribune*, 1st of January 1893, p.22.

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05. The exhibition of Bancroft's collection of pre-Raphaelite art, by Magali Martin

Abstract

When it comes to the study of pre-Raphaelite artwork collections, the name of the American Samuel Bancroft Junior (1840-1915), who ran a textile industry, is very well-known; his pre-Raphaelite collection – gathered between 1892 and 1915 – is the largest outside of the United Kingdom. This article – based on parts of my master thesis – tries to explain how by the sole passion of this industrial for these British artists, Bancroft managed, at the end of the century, to spread a brand new enthusiasm for Rossetti's and Burne Jone's art among his peers and be an active part of a cultural transfert between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

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06. Instructiones fabricate et supellectilis ecclesiasticae (selection), by Charles Borromeo, translated into English by Dr. Evelyn Carol Voelker

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Book1

Chapter 1

THE SITE OF A CHURCH

The first thing to do when building a church is for the Bishop and the architect he has commissioned and approved to choose the most suitable site.

It is particularly important that the location of the church, wherever it is built, should be up high. If this location is completely level, it should at least be sufficiently prominent so that access to the church will be by three or at the most five steps. If the topography is such that there is no more elevated part, then the church should be built on a base so that it will be raised and rise up over the plain, and the floor will be reached by means of those three or five steps.

So that there will be greater veneration in the church and to keep it, insofar as possible, far from all noise which might disturb the divine offices, care must also be taken in choosing the site that it be far from muddy and dirty areas, from all kinds of filth, stables, sheep pens, taverns, forges, shops, and markets of all kinds. Places of this kind should also be far from the surrounding areas of the church.

Care must also be taken in choosing the site for the church that the building will appear as a separate block, that is unconnected to and separated from the walls of the surrounding buildings by a space of several paces, as will be explained further on with regard to the street, as established by the ancients and required by correct criteria.

This can be most easily done in the towns and places where buildings are not crowded together.

On the proximity and conjunction of ecclesiastical buildings with the site of the church

It is not contrary to the criteria applied to the building of the church that the living quarters of the ministers of the church, that is the Bishop, the canons, and the parish priest, should be built to one side or the other, but not however adhering to the walls of the church. They should be connected to the church by walls that run through the free space mentioned above, and in general be in the proximity of the site of the church, as recommended by the canon of the Council of Carthage.

The living quarters of the ministers called custodians or sacristans can be built in a place adjacent to the church or the sacristy, or above the sacristy itself (as can be seen in some churches) so that the ecclesiastical furnishings entrusted to these ministers will be better protected from danger of sacrilege, theft or fire. However in building this residence, care must be taken above all that the structure does not obstruct or disfigure the façade of the church or block windows or openings or furnish impediments of any kind.

Secondly, there should be no openings or windows in the dwelling which look into the church. Lastly there should be no door providing an entrance into or path through the church that could be used by persons and things for domestic, private or daily use, but only a door to be used by those who enter for their duties, regarding the divine offices.

The general area of the church

Care must be taken that the general area chosen for the church not be in a damp or marshy place or near hills or steep slopes where a torrent or some other strong flow of water might damage the building.

If however it is necessary to build on a slope, it will be leveled according to the size of the future church, leaving a level area of twelve or more cubits, according to need, at the back and on the sides, between the church and the slope that has been cut away, which will then have a solid wall, after channels have been dug on both sides for carrying off the water which will at times flow in.

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The size of the site of the church

The size of the site of the church must be such as to accommodate not only the people living in the place where the church is being built, whether it is a parish, a collegiate, or cathedral church, but also taking into account the influx of other faithful on determined holy days.

A criteria not to be disregarded is that for every person there be a space of one cubit and eight ounces square, in addition to the space occupied by the columns, piers and walls.

Chapter 2 THE PLAN OF THE CHURCH

The site of the church has been briefly discussed above. Considerations on the plan now will be given.

Since many plans are possible, the bishop must make his decision after consulting with an expert architect and taking into account the nature of the site and the size of the building.

The cruciform plan, going back almost to apostolic times, and as seen in the major basilicas of Rome, built in this way, is to be preferred. The round edifice was once used for pagan temples and much less among Christian peoples.

Every church, then, and in particular those requiring an imposing appearance, ought preferably to be built in the form of a cross. There are various types, such as for example the oblong one, which is most commonly used. The other types are rarer.

Therefore, where possible, the oblong cross plan should be used in every church to be built, whether it is a cathedral, collegiate or parish church. Where the site requires a plan that differs from the oblong form, the advice of the architect can be followed subject to approval by the bishop.

Building criteria for the cruciform church

The cruciform church, whether it is to have a single nave, or a nave and two, or four, aisles, can be

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constructed following varied proportions and designs, but also using only this one: that is with two chapels built at either side of the main chapel, of course outside of the entrance [to the main chapel]. Extended like arms, these will project beyond the sides of the whole building, and will be visible externally depending on how large they are, according to the type of architecture.

Chapter 3

EXTERIOR WALLS AND FACADE

The other things regarding the type of structure, the building materials, the solidity of the walls, the plaster, the revetment, depending on the type of church to be built and the other characteristics of the region and of the location, will be diligently established at the discretion of the bishop, after consultation with the architect.

However these norms regarding the external walls must be observed and that is that the side and back walls are not to be decorated with images. However the more the facade is decorated with holy images or paintings that depict the sacred history, the more pleasing and solemn it will be.

In the pious decoration of the facade designed in line with the structure of the church and the size of the building, the architect will take care that no secular images appear, and that what is suitable to the sanctity of the place be depicted as well as the means available permit.

Care must also be taken that on the façade of every church, especially if a parish church, the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary holding her Son be decorously and piously painted or carved outside above the main entrance. The effigy of the saint to whom the church is dedicated will be set on her right, and on her left that of the saint to whom the people of that parish are particularly devoted. If it is impossible to have all three figures, only the image of the saint to whom the church is dedicated will be made. If the church is dedicated to the feast day or entitled to the Virgin of the Annunciation, the Assumption or the Nativity of Mary, the image of the blessed Virgin will be represented in a manner that is suitable to the nature of the mystery revealed. It will then be the task of the architect to see diligently that this part of the structure

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is well protected from rain and other ravages of weather.

The other sculptures or paintings and other ornaments, solemn and seemly, which help make the facade of the church majestic and solemn, will be established by the bishop, who will ask for the architect's opinion if necessary, according to the type of ecclesiastical edifice built.

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Chapter 17

SACRED IMAGES OR PICTURES

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According to the decree of the Council of Trent and the Provincial constitutions, the bishop must take great care that the sacred images are piously and religiously depicted. Moreover a heavy punishment or fine for painters and sculptors who depart from the prescribed rules in the representations mentioned above has been provided for.

A sanction has also been provided for the ecclesiastical rector who allow an unusual image to be depicted or placed in their church, contrary to the rules prescribed by the Tridentine decree.

What is to be avoided and what is to be observed in the sacred images

First of all no sacred image containing a false dogma or that offers the uneducated an occasion for dangerous error, or that is at variance with the Sacred Scriptures or Church tradition, is to be depicted in the church or elsewhere. Conversely, the image must conform to the truths of the Scriptures, the traditions, ecclesiastical histories, customs and usages of the Mother Church.

Moreover in painting or sculpting sacred images, just as nothing false, uncertain or apocryphal, superstitious, or unusual is to be depicted, so whatever is profane, base or obscene, dishonest or

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provocative will be strictly avoided. Likewise all that is outlandish, which does not incite men to piety, or which can offend the soul and eyes of the faithful is forbidden.

Furthermore, although attempts must be made to seek as accurate as possible a semblance of the saint, care will be taken not to purposefully reproduce the likeness of another person, living or dead.

Images of beasts of burden, dogs, fish and other brute animals are not to be shown in the church or other holy places, unless the depiction of the holy story, in accordance with the custom of the Mother Church, specifically requires it.

The dignity of sacred images

The representation of the sacred images will correspond in all things to the dignity and holiness of the prototypes, fittingly and decorously, in the appearance, position and adornment of the person.

Distinguishing characteristics of the saints

Those things that for their meaning as something sacred are painted on or attached to the images of the saints, must conform, in an adequate and decorous manner, to what is specified by the church. Examples are the nimbus or crown, similar to a round shield, placed around the heads of the saints, palms held by martyrs, the miter and crosier which are given to Bishops, and other like things, as well as the distinctive attribute of each saint.

Moreover, care must be taken that the representation corresponds to historical truth, to church practice, to the criteria prescribed by the Fathers.

Care must be taken that the nimbus of Christ the Lord is distinguished from those of the saints by a cross. Finally care must be taken not to attribute the nimbus to anyone who has not been canonized by the Church.

Locations unsuitable for sacred pictures

No holy image is to be depicted on the ground, not even in the Church, nor in humid places, where with

time the painting would be ruined and deteriorate; neither under windows, from which rain water could drip, nor in the proximity of points where nails [ubi clavialiquando figendi sunt Latin, ponerse clavos Sp.] are to be fixed at any time, nor, we repeat, on the ground or in dirty and muddy places.

In locations of this kind, not even the stories of the saints or depictions of symbols of the sacred mysteries will be represented.

Rite for blessing the images

Not only must one pay attention to the location but also to the ancient Ecclesiastical rite. In other words, the images of the saints, once made, will be consecrated by solemn benediction and those specific prayers prescribed in the Pontifical or Ceremonial book.

The names of the saints that must sometimes be inscribed

It is not untoward that, in many of the sacred images depicted in a church, the names of the saints represented are written under the lesser known figures. This is an ancient practice, as confirmed by St. Paulinus in this line:

"Martyribus mediam pia nomina signant."

[Let the pious names be marked among the martyrs].

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Accessories and ornamental additions

The accessories, that is the elements the painters and sculptors usually add to the images for decoration, shall not be profane, nor sensual, nor solely for aesthetic delight, nor incompatible with the sacred picture, such as for example the deformed human heads commonly called "mascaroni", or the birds, or the sea, or the green fields painted to please and delight the eye and for decoration. [They may be used] only if they are an integral part of the sacred story represented, or unless they are ex-votos, in which human heads or other things, mentioned above, are painted to explain the meaning.

The ornaments and apparel painted onto the sacred

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images must have nothing unsuitable, or which, in other words, has little or nothing to do with sanctity.

Votive panels

Care must also be taken, as prescribed above, regarding the ex-votos, offerings, wax images and other objects habitually hung in the churches according to ancient practice and tradition, in remembrance of health recovered, or danger avoided, or a divine grace miraculously received, for frequently they are false, indecorous, indecent and superstitious depictions.

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Book 2

Dicta 1 THE CROSS (1553-54)

The cross that is to be placed either on the high altar or on the tabernacle of the sacred Eucharist, should be approximately square in shape, with the lower part a bit longer and ending in a small tubular appendage so that it [the cross] can be easily removed from its support when it is to be used in processions or other ecclesiastical services.

The cross is to be suitable and fitting in size and decoration to the altar.

The cross of the high altar in a cathedral basilica and in collegiate churches will be of gold or (if finances do not permit) of silver plate. This cross is for use in solemnities and Offices; another of gilded brass, suitably chased and decorated, should be used on other days.

The cross to be placed on the high altar in other churches, particularly parish churches, will be of the same material or also of silver.

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The support by which the cross is properly held on the altar will be made of gold, silver, or at least of brass, or even gilded wood in churches whose income is small. It will be elegant and made in a graceful form, and sufficiently high and narrow for the tubular appendage to be tightly inserted. A cross to be placed on a minor altar will have the same support and shape but may be considerably smaller and must not be removable. The material will at least be brass or a more precious metal, but it can be wood painted and suitably gilded.

The Chapter cross, or that which is carried in processions, in funerals, and in other sacred ecclesiastical services as is the custom, will have a very strong shaft, suitably painted, on which it will be well fixed.

But where it is customary (as in the Ambrosian church) that a Chapter, or another ecclesiastical body, or the pastors or others who care for souls during ecclesiastical services carry a square cross, measuring two cubits or a little more in height and width, then this cross will not have a shaft, but only a short handle of the same metal. This custom, clearly ancient and tested by use, should definitively be retained.

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Dicta 4 THE ALTAR CARD [CARTAGLORIA] 1556

The altar card [of silent prayers] should be neither of oak nor of walnut, nor indeed of a dark wood, but of fir or some other light wood of this type, so that the glued page will not become dark.

It should be a little wider than high: on the front it should be becomingly embellished with a frame.

It must be set somewhat above the altar table on a

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decorated support so that the page of the prayers may be more easily seen.

This indeed is for everyday use.

But that for solemn feasts must be more handsome. It should have a gilded or beautifully painted frame; the page of the silent prayers should be printed in block letters, and its pictures and the capital letters should be illuminated in red and gold.

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Dicta 65

THE STANDARD OR BANNER [1573]

The banner of the patron saint of the town is to be more distinguished both in material and ornamentation than the parish banner and also larger and almost square in shape.

The parish banner (which in ecclesiastical terminology is called a *siparum* or *fanon*) is to be made of strong cloth interwoven with gold or silver, or of silk. It will be three and a half cubits long and equally wide, so as to have a square shape. It is known from ancient evidence that the distinguished and most venerable banner of the emperor Constantine, which the Romans call *labarum*, was of this shape and interwoven with a precious cross whose image appeared in heaven. Therefore it will be of a much more precious material where the income of the parish community permits.

It is to be painted, decorated or interwoven with the image of the saint after whom the church is named. In addition, it will be of the color required, according to the rite of the church, by the image of the saint whose banner is carried. It will have a decoration of fringes of the same color as the banner, mixed with threads of gold or silver, all around.

It will be hung on a strong wooden shaft, on the top

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of which a small square cross is fastened. The shaft is to be about two cubits longer than the banner and of the same color as the banner. Also the banner carried by the women in public supplications to identify the parish district is to be of the material, color, image, and decoration as the one described above. However, it is to be only one cubit long and wide, and with a short and slender shaft, to which likewise a small cross will be fastened on the top.

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Dicta 82

THE CROSS TO BE BROUGHT TO THE SICK 1579

The cross brought to the sick is to be made of gold, silver, or brass, or painted and gilded wood. The finely made image of Christ the Lord on it should be such as to arouse piety.

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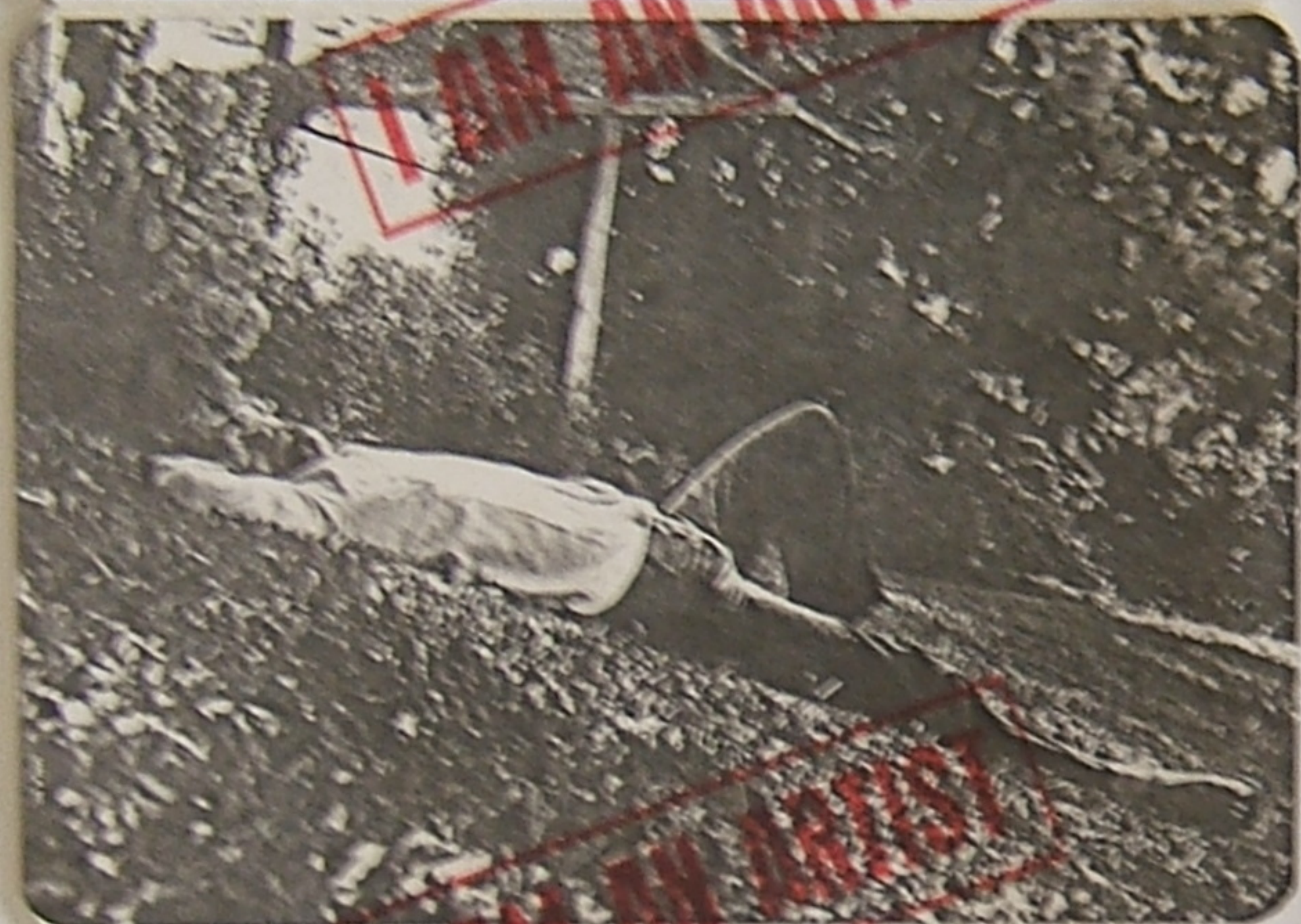
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Updated on Απρ 22, 2012 by [\[no name found\]](#) (Version 31)







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